



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

— YOU —
PLAY ME FALSE

MORTIMER & FRANCES
COLLINS.



600060235M





YOU PLAY ME FALSE.

A Novel.

BY

MORTIMER AND FRANCES COLLINS.

Miranda. "Sweet lord, you play me false."

Ferdinand. "No, my dear'st love

I would not for the world."

THE TEMPEST

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.
1878.
(All Rights Reserved.)

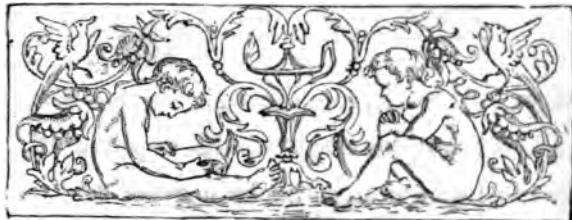
251. e. 714.



CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MR. TIMOTHY AND MISTRESS KEZIAH -	1
II. DRAXFELL ALIVE AGAIN - - -	7
III. NULLA DIES SINE LINEE - - -	27
IV. BLUE SPECTACLES - - -	43
V. YOU PLAY ME FALSE - - -	63
VI. ANGER AND JEALOUSY - - -	83
VII. LORD BRODSPEARE'S ADVERTISEMENT -	99
VIII. IN THE WILDS OF ISLINGTON - - -	111
IX. PLANS - - - -	118
X. WANTED, A GOVERNESS - - -	136
XI. WITHOUT A CHARACTER - - -	144
XII. TWO PRETTY WOMEN - - -	157
XIII. VIRTUOUS INDIGNATION - - -	170
XIV. THE SPIDER AND THE FLY - - -	180
XV. A FRESH START - - -	199
XVI. THE PRISONER AND THE RAKE -	217
XVII. BETTY'S VISITOR - - -	228
XVIII. THE ADVERTISEMENT ANSWERED -	242
XIX. FLORENCE IN DOUBT - - -	253





YOU PLAY ME FALSE.

CHAPTER I

MR. TIMOTHY AND MISTRESS KEZIAH.

BETTY found her common sense and not prevail at all against Miss Florry's arguments, and the 'third-floor,' to whom she often looked appealingly, was so lost in admiration of the little lady, that he was quite unable to oppose her in any way. Betty kept bringing the memory of her 'poor dear master' to bear on the argument, but Florence insisted that her

father, so far from objecting to her present mode of employment would approve it, as placing her amongst books a great deal more than any other way of making a living would. So Betty, when she had walked with Florence to Limbo Row and returned home again, was disconsolate, and waited for her ‘third-floor’ to come in at night to talk the matter over with him again. But an incident was shortly to happen that would do what all Betty’s arguments could not accomplish.

When Tom and Jack Drax bought the books from Florence, they quarrelled as to who had made the best bargain. This was not the only quarrel that arose from the visit to the book-shop ; but the second one came some days later, after they had left London.

Mr. Timothy Radstock was not surprised when he received a short note from the

owner of Draxfell, giving orders for the place to be made ready for him and his brother. He did not altogether believe in a ‘priest of the Latin communion’ having such power as old Keziah Gibbon credited to him, but he thought it was time some notice was taken of the children. Old Keziah had urged him, whenever she saw him, to write to ‘Mr. Tom, or them Popish creatures will be taking everything out of our hands.’ They had had the care of Draxfell for so many years, that she always spoke as if they were joint proprietors. She was very fond of the children, and was glad for them to have some education, but gossips had frightened her into believing that Popish priests were always on the look out to get property into their hands, and that the pale parson was trying to pervert the children for the sake of the property.

Her idea was that ‘me and Mr. Timothy’

were responsible for everything at Draxfell, and she began to think it time that ‘me and Mr. Timothy’ interfered concerning the Popish priest. Not that she complained of him in himself, for he was, as she observed, ‘the very sweetest young man, and never grumbled a bit when Master Charles or Miss Clara were tiresome ; and the poor dear is so pale and delicate, I can’t help taking care of him, and nobody would believe, to see his sweet ways, that he meant harm.’ This and many other remarks on the subject were made to Mr. Timothy on one of his visits while he was discussing a very comfortable supper that Keziah had prepared. The result was the letter to the brothers, which we have already seen, and an immediate answer from them that they would be down in three or four weeks. So Mr. Timothy and Mistress Gibbon were busy with preparations ; and when a second letter came, saying that

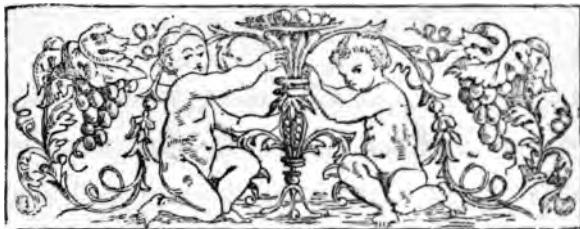
not only would the brothers arrive, but visitors with them, for whom everything must be in good order, Mr. Timothy took off his spectacles and wiped them, and put them on again, and read the letter a second time, and wondered what Mr. Tom could be about to expect it all to be done in so short a time. The brothers sent down carriages and horses, which met the whole party at the station when they arrived.

There were the brothers and Lord Brod-speare, and Mrs. Courtenay, with their personal servants. Mr. Timothy Radstock with Charlie and Clara were there to meet them.

Clara and Charlie were not astonished. These children, carefully observing the mir-acles of Nature every instant, were not likely to be easily surprised at anything.

They were glad to see their parents, but they had learnt to be happy without them,

so that their return was regarded by the children more as an excitement than an event causing any particular joy. Clara eyed the visitors shyly. Charlie liked the look of Lord Brodspeare, and walked up to him and held out his hand, and said boldly, ‘How do you do, sir?’ He then bowed to Mrs. Courtenay, and went up to Clara and whispered, ‘I don’t like *her*, but he’s a jolly fellow; we’ll have some fun with him.’



CHAPTER II.

DRAXFELL ALIVE AGAIN.

A castle dies, when its lord's chivalry perishes ;
A mansion dies, when there's a prosperous rogue in it ;
A cottage dies, when by sheer scamps inhabited.

The Comedy of Dreams.



RAXFELL was alive again now, and no mistake ; but the old house preserved a continuous life while Charlie and Clara were there. For those young folk were life from head to foot ; the strong, vivid, vigorous life made them always restless, they were singing or playing, climbing trees or shooting birds, all through their time. Two wild children ! What thought

they of their distant fathers ? The great trees on the island seemed far truer friends.

To Adela Courtenay they seemed very wild indeed. They had a habit of asking awkward questions and saying odd things. They were not at all impressed by the widow's fine clothes or elegant manner.

On the first evening at dinner, she asked why they did not come in to dessert ; but she did not ask again. She decided they were best out of the way till they had been better trained.

How this training was to be done she had already formed an idea, but whether it was to be carried into effect she would wait for circumstances to decide. For Adela had not altogether given up the idea of marrying Lord Brodspeare, but had determined that if he could not be made to marry her she would then take Tom Drax, who was her most obedient slave.

Jack had by this time found out his brother's infatuation, as indeed any one might, for it was too apparent ; but it was the one subject on which they were not likely to quarrel. Jack really loved his brother, and though he would not have chosen Adela as a sister, still he thought that his brother would be the happier for marrying, so he took care not to mention the matter.

Now this was provoking to Tom, who wanted Jack to be the first to mention it ; and he was continually on the verge of breaking out into a quarrel with his brother for being silent.

'Confound Jack !' he thought ; 'it's just like him not to say a word when he knows I want him to. He *must* see what is going on.'

He must have been blind if he did not, as everybody could, and everybody made their remarks accordingly.

Old Keziah and Mr. Timothy nodded their heads over it. Keziah was quite taken by Mrs. Courtenay's charming manners. The widow endeavoured to please all the dependents at Draxfell.

'I think we are likely to see something more of the pretty lady, eh ! Mr. Timothy ? It is easy to see which way the wind blows.'

'Well, Mistress Gibbon,' answered Timothy, 'it blows a soft south-west at present ; we'll hope it may not turn east ; but fine ladies have fine tempers sometimes.'

'Not when they get their own way, Mr. Timothy. And Mr. Tom is not the one to say nay or to contradict any one except his own flesh and blood ; and he and Mr. Jack do certainly have a tiff sometimes, bless their hearts, but they don't mean nothing by it.'

However both Mr. Timothy Radstock and

Mistress Keziah Gibbon, whatever their own private opinions of Mrs. Courtenay were, saw that it was best to be friendly with her, for they knew that if she became mistress of the place she would be really mistress, as their master was an easy-going, good-natured man, who was only too glad to shake off any responsibility. They were therefore very polite to her.

The children were not so far-seeing. They had not lived in the world long enough to find out that it is necessary to consider one's own interest, and in doing so to be deceitful.

Deceit is perhaps a strong word for a custom so much practised. We can call it diplomacy, or tact, or any other word that will smooth it down and not make it seem so bad as it is.

These happy children, then, had not learned what diplomacy or tact means.



They said out what they thought without fear of the consequences.

One day they asked Mrs. Courtenay and Lord Blethin to go and see their island and their three favourite trees.

‘Now, Mrs. Courtenay,’ said Charlie, when they reached the island, ‘come up into this tree, I’ll show you the way up.’ And he began to climb the tree as easily as if he were walking upstairs.

‘My dear, I cannot climb trees,’ said the widow.

And, in her dainty dress and high-heeled shoes and silk stockings, she certainly did not look as if she could mount the great rough oak.

‘Why not?’ said Charlie. ‘Clara can. Come, Clara, and show her the way.’

Clara sprang up in the tree.

‘Because it is only children that climb trees,’ said Mrs. Courtenay.



‘Oh !’ said Charlie. ‘I say, Clara, you’ll soon have to give up climbing then.’

‘I’m sure I shan’t,’ said Clara.

‘I say, Mrs. Courtenay,’ said Charlie, ‘at what age did you give up climbing ?’

‘Bother the boy,’ muttered the widow to Lord Brodspeare. ‘Do make him quiet.’

‘Charlie,’ said Lord Brodspeare, laughing, ‘you must never talk about ladies’ ages.’

‘Why not, Lord Brodspeare ?’ he asked.

‘Because it’s rude.’

‘Is it ?’ said Charlie in a tone of wonderment. ‘Well, how very funny. Does it apply to females of all sorts ? to birds and dogs and horses and trees ? That clump of elms over there is female ; mustn’t I mention their age ?’

‘Don’t ask such silly questions, Charlie,’ said Lord Brodspeare. ‘You’ll have to go to school if you’re so silly.’

‘Then I’ll be wise, and not say anything

about the ages of females, for I don't want to go to school. We should have to take these three trees with us if we went, shouldn't we, Clara ? We couldn't do without them. I say, Mrs. Courtenay, do tell Uncle Tom not to send us to school ; he'll do anything that you ask him.

' Do let us leave these children, Blethin,' said Mrs. Courtenay, who was tired of them.

She wanted a chance of being alone with Lord Brodspeare, a chance she seldom got now.

He punted her across, and they walked together in the grounds.

' What little bears ! ' she remarked as soon as she was out of hearing.

' Yes, Adela, it will be something for you to do to get them into order. They're quite worth the trouble ; there's plenty of good material to work upon. They will turn out well under your care.'



‘How can you talk like that, Blethin ?
How hard-hearted you are !’

‘Hard-hearted, when I am picturing every happiness for you ? Why, you and Tom will make a capital couple. I thought you were getting on splendidly together ; just like a couple of doves billing and cooing.’

‘Blethin, you are determined to make me hate you,’ she said, pulling her hand away from his arm and pushing him aside in her rage. ‘You know very well I have only been obeying your orders.’

‘Now don’t get into a passion, Adela ; it doesn’t suit your style of beauty. Come here, child,’ he said, taking her hand softly and putting it on his arm. ‘Come and listen to a little common sense.’

‘I don’t want common sense,’ she said.

‘What *do* you want ?’

‘I want love.’

‘And haven’t you got it ? I’m sure Tom

loves you as much as a man can possibly love a woman.'

'Blethin, why do you annoy me with constantly talking of poor Tom? He's a dear good fellow, but he does not understand what real passionate love means. *You* cannot know either, or you would pity me. Blethin, I have once in my life realised what passionate love is. I love one man. I shall never love another.'

She had been standing still as she said this, looking earnestly into Lord Brodspeare's face.

For once Lord Brodspeare felt a little sorry for her. He began to think she really was in earnest, and that he had misjudged her; but he cast the idea aside presently, and said to himself: 'She's a splendid actress. She is fascinated by me, and is ambitious to marry me just because I'm impracticable. She persuades herself she's in love. It's nothing of

the kind. If I had fallen an easy victim to her, she would not have cared a bit for me. She found me difficult, so she has used all her arts to conquer. What she is suffering from is not love, but disappointed ambition. This is a last desperate attempt to conquer me. She is keeping in with Tom in case she fails. I'll now make it decisive.'

All these thoughts ran through his brain in a few moments as Adela stood looking in his face. She was certainly a wonderful picture of a pleading woman. She must have completely overcome any man who was less a judge of character than Lord Brodspeare. The tears just stood in her beautiful eyes ; she was too wise to allow them to spoil her complexion. Her lips were a little parted, and trembled. One hand was on his arm, with the other she played with the button and button-hole of his coat.

'Actress though he knew her to be, Lord

Brodspeare felt tempted to kiss her. Surrounding circumstances helped to make the matter worse for him. It was one of those glorious October afternoons so rare in England, and never seen in any other climate, when a golden glow is on everything, when you are sorry to go in and say good-bye to the beautiful day, because you feel that it may be a long time before you see such another.

Really, Lord Brodspeare was too much tempted ; even the weather was against him, and the beautiful colours in the trees, and the pleasant smell of the dead leaves on which they trod, and the song of the friendly little robin on a bough just above their heads : all were against him ; so that, although he had sternly made up his mind to speak out plainly to Adela once for all, he was almost undone when he saw the beautiful face turned to his. She saw his features give way for a moment, and thought her time of triumph had

come, but he moved aside suddenly, and said :

‘ Let us go on, Adela. You will get cold standing in these damp leaves.’

She moved on silently, feeling her chance was gone.

‘ You accuse me,’ said Lord Brodspeare, ‘ of want of pity, because, as you say, I do not understand what love is. I do know what love is, Adela.’ She looked up hopefully for a moment. ‘ I love one woman with all my heart and soul, and shall never love another.’ Adela’s face turned white with excitement, as she looked inquiringly as to whom this woman could be. There was just one spark of hope that he meant herself. ‘ I am determined to have that woman and none other,’ he continued.

‘ Who is she ?’ said Adela faintly.

‘ Florence Lisle,’ he answered.

Adela was silent for a time. She had at

least calculated that if he did not love her, he loved nobody else.

‘Then why did you make me love you, when you knew it was useless all the time ?’

‘What do you mean ?’

‘Why, you should have told me you loved another woman when you first saw me, and not encouraged me in the way you did.’

Lord Brodspeare might have retaliated that the encouragement hardly came altogether from his side, but he would not insult a woman. He had certainly amused himself by flirting with Adela, but he had always looked upon her as a woman who cared more for admiration and flattery than anything else in the world. He knew that she admired him, or rather cared for his admiration, simply because it was difficult to get, therefore he did not deserve any reproaches from her.

‘I have only lately met her,’ he said.

‘Where?’ asked Adela.

‘At Blethin.’

This was another blow to Adela. To think that he could fall in love with any one after he had seen her!

‘What is she?’

‘A nursery-governess.’

‘A nursery-governess!’ shrieked Adela.

‘Yes.’

‘Some butcher’s or baker’s daughter, I suppose.’

‘No, nor not even a carpenter’s,’ Lord Brodspeare would like to have said. He had learnt the secret of Adela’s birth from her husband, and thought she deserved this little speech, but his courtesy would not allow him to make it.

‘No, she is a parson’s daughter, and I rather think must be related to me, as my grandmother was a Lisle, and she is uncommonly like my grandmother’s portrait.’

‘Where is she?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘You don’t know?’

‘I wish I did.’

Adela was wretched. That a mere servant, a poor parson’s daughter, should be preferred before her was incredible. She forgot her own low degree. She entirely changed her manner now. She had hitherto been in a supplicating, imploring mood, asking for a little love; now she was defiant.

They walked straight to the house silently. She tripped up the steps in dainty fashion.

‘Ta-ta till dinner-time,’ she said, turning round at the top of the steps, and waving her hand prettily. ‘I wish you joy of your little nursery-governess—when you find her.’

Adela came down to dinner looking more charming than ever. Tom Drax was enraptured. Blethin was amused. She divided her smiles and attentions throughout the

evening equally between the three gentlemen, but she managed to make some side-hits at Lord Brodspeare, which he only could understand.

At night she could not sleep, and flattered herself that she was a victim of disappointed love, whereas it was only disappointed ambition. They both have much the same effect physically, though not morally perhaps.

On the following morning Adela, after a short broken sleep, woke up feeling ill. She had taken cold. The

‘Rich moist smell of the rotting leaves,’

as Tennyson has it, is perhaps not so healthy as pleasant; and those dainty little French shoes that Adela wore were scarcely the thing for a tramp through the grounds in October. Nevertheless she determined to go downstairs and make the best of it, for Lord Brodspeare should not suppose she was suf-

sering on his account. A glance in the mirror showed her that the cold had affected one of her eyes, which was bloodshot. Now, as Adela always made her eyes do good service, she felt she could not appear with one in such a state. How is it possible to give a bewitching glance with a bloodshot eye ?

She had the mortification of remaining in her room for the day ; her apologies were conveyed to Tom Drax, with the information that she had taken cold, and Lord Blethin was left to suppose she was suffering from disappointed ambition.

Poor Tom was very much concerned, and wanted to have a doctor sent for immediately, but Adela assured him through her maid that the illness was but slight, and she would probably be well the next day.

It may perhaps seem that Lord Blethin was not acting quite a friendly part to Tom

in endeavouring to make a match between him and Adela Courtenay.

Was she good enough for Tom Drax ?

It is a mere matter of opinion. Some might say it is a great shame that good, honest Tom Drax should be married to the scheming widow. Others might say that it is a pity the brilliant Adela should be thrown away on that old fogey Tom.

Lord Brodspeare did not hold either opinion. He saw that Tom was just the man who would admire a beautiful woman like Adela. He was inactive, and wanted some one to take the lead in everything. Adela would do this, and do it well.

Then Adela was just the woman that required a man to worship her. And being obliged to think for Tom, and take the lead in every way, she would find plenty to occupy her mind and thus become a better woman. Not that she was bad in any way ; but she

was leading a heartless, thoughtless kind of life, seeking admiration only, and Lord Brodspeare knew how despicable such a woman becomes in after life as her beauty fades. He could not help taking an interest in her, but he regarded her as a pretty spoiled child who required certain management ; and as she had done him the honour to give him what she thought was her heart, he felt it his duty to provide another heart in place of his own. Although he seemed to treat the matter lightly, as he did everything else, he had really considered it seriously, and he thought he was doing the best he could both for his friend, Tom Drax, and his *protégée*, Adela Courtenay, in thus encouraging a marriage between them.



CHAPTER III.

NULLA DIES SINE LINEÆ.

‘He was a scholar, and a ripe, and good one;
Exceeding wise, fair spoken, and persuading.’

SHAKESPEARE.



FATHER SIMPLICIUS LAX-

MAN adhered to the motto of this chapter. No day with him passed without something done. Though he were racked with rheumatic gout, by which at times he was horribly tortured, he invariably wrote a line or two. Several difficult questions had considerably puzzled Father Laxman, but the one he found absolutely unsolvable was, why he should be

worried with rheumatic gout. Others also have found this problem difficult. But the most hideous pain in the world would not prevent Simplicius Laxman from doing something every day of his life. He was indefatigable. His mental and ethical triumphs vanquished his physical suffering ; and to see his critical search for the beeswing in his port wine you would not imagine him a man to whom port wine was poison. How many men there are who mix their pleasure and their pain in this foolish way—who shorten their days by lengthening their nights— who sacrifice their livers to stimulate their brains !

‘Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.’ ;

Father Laxman, as he sat in his study, felt perfectly certain that with a little more power he could move the world. He desired to be the Archimedes of the Church

of Rome. It has been well said that all roads lead to Rome—a painter or a poet is welcomed as a Cardinal-Deacon. Yet must it in reply be said that Rome demands something in return for her dignities. Any man of vast capacity and splendid insincerity who treads the Romeward path at twenty, may calculate on being a cardinal at fifty—and perhaps, if he lives long enough, the Pope at some time or other. Grand prize, hard to grasp, soon to be relinquished! Yet it makes priests of many ambitious men who might otherwise have been members of society to some extent useful. And when a man of genius has been hardened into a pope, the magnet of the spiritual world, he is neither man nor genius any longer. He is a mighty mechanic force, pushed forward by untraceable energies, based in mysterious depths of humanity which no history investigator will ever

fathom. Old and weak as he may be, he is a marvellous power.

There are men to whom tranquillity is impossible. They must be riding across country, voyaging to Ceylon, writing to the *Times* or the *Tablet*, the *Guardian* or the *Rock*, making speeches on subjects whereof they are wholly ignorant, getting up testimonials to somebody or being themselves testimonialled. Testimonials of all sorts Simplicius Laxman frequently obtained ; for he was the chief priest of the loveliest little church ever built by Pugin, in a London district of aristocratic squares and streets, where rentals are enormous and society is elegant, where the livery-stable keepers make fortunes, where cosy clusters of a butcher, a fishmonger, a wine-merchant, and a poultorer, are to be found in odd corners and courts. There was a High Church clergyman in that fashionable district : there

was a Broad Church clergyman ; there was also a tremendous dissenting orator. The High Churchman officiated in the parish church, and of course was the great clerical official. He was popular by reason of his happy approximations to the methods of Rome ; but he would have been more popular if he had not been so dogmatic and tyrannic. The Broad Churchman had a chapel of ease all to himself, exempt in some way from the Rector's control, to which more men than women usually came. He in fact taught doctrine a trifle too strong for the female sex, who like to have something to believe ; but the young fellows, who like to believe as little as possible, crowded to hear this loud and fluent gentleman talk exalted negativism. They thought it almost as amusing as billiards. The dissenting chapel held more people than the two churches together ; and the preacher, a man

of real talent, had all the tradespeople among his congregation, except those who did their business in a gentlemanly way.

However, notwithstanding the Romish proclivities of the rector, and the breadth of view and easy mixture of Colensoism and Christianity of the vicar of St. Agabus, and of the magnificent roar and many tea-meetings of the minister of Bethesda, the fact remains that Father Simplicius Laxman was far the strongest spiritual power. He seemed to mean it. He was no mere Blougram verifying Browning's grand satiric sketch. Laxman simply held the Church of Rome to be the only possible Church to rule the world. How much in her creed was myth and how much truth, in no degree troubled him. She taught what the world wanted. If any one had dared to argue with him about the Virgin Mary, he would have excommunicated him ; being of opinion that

the Virgin is as requisite to Rome's religion as Aphrodite to that of Greece. Indeed, Laxman was rather sorry that modern Rome could not rival ancient Greece by producing an Artemis and an Athene as well. Every religion, he thought, should have a trinity of goddesses, to represent love, wisdom, and chastity.

Simplicius Laxman, by some mysterious means, spent more money in the parish than its rector, the vicar of St. Agabus, and the minister of Bethesda, all put together. His rivals were apt to hint that St. Peter's Pence must help him. Whatever the source, the money flowed in a brimming stream. Father Laxman's beautiful church was gradually surrounded by a cluster of schools for boys, girls, and infants, which were far more crowded than those of the parish church or of Bethesda. They were more attractive, being done in the choicest decorated Gothic, and

surrounded with well-kept gardens in which there were fountains and aviaries. They had cool calm cloisters, and sundials with quaint Latin mottoes, and ponds in which gold-fish basked amid white-flowered insect-haunted water-lilies, yellow at the core. Simplicius Laxman was a priest of taste as well as of resource.

Not here did he pause. Some common land in the parish, in my boyhood a place where it was jolly to play football, has for lord of the manor a noble earl who loves money. A railway company wanted a suburban station there: into their Act of Parliament the astute solicitors slipped a clause which enabled the aforesaid noble earl to sell them, at of course an enormous price, many more acres of this common land (free and open for ever by common law of England) than the station could possibly need. Parliament is omnipotent, but attorneys

are omniscient. The railway company resold the land which was not required for the station at more than twice the fancy price the noble earl had demanded.

Simplicius Laxman bought twenty acres of it close to his church and schools, and paid the purchase money by a cheque on the Bank of England. The rector, the vicar of St. Agabus, the minister of Bethesda, all wondered how he did it.

Then came a whole army of builders. Two plain square edifices arose with wondrous rapidity, each exactly alike, each many stories high, each in grounds fenced in by a brick wall of ten feet or so, with a *chevaux de frise* on the top. The neighbourhood wondered what this could mean. In due course enlightenment reached them. This was Corinth Abbey, and Simplicius Laxman was the first Abbot.

However, in such institutions, where there

is an attempt to spiritually isolate both sexes, an abbess is almost as important as an abbot. Father Laxman had found no difficulty in building his schools, in raising his abbey ; and of course it was quite clear that he must be the first abbot. Authoritative instructions from Rome had reached the Archbishop of Westminster on this point. A grand solemnity was held, to which (how sad !) many lady adherents of the High Church rector and the Broad Church vicar . . . ay, and even of Bethesda's minister . . . crowded eagerly. Simplicius Laxman, five feet eleven, and broad-shouldered, was a well-known figure in his sacerdotal black in the High Street : he would buy his tea of a Methodist grocer, and talk politics with him good-humouredly, bringing his intellect down to the grocer's measure ; he would take the demurest little girl from the rector's schools into the nearest confectioner's, and buy her

nice things. He was all things to all men . . . and women, and children. He was popular. There was scarce a Sunday sermon of the rector's in which he did not argue gravely against Father Laxman's teaching, or of the vicar's of St. Agabus in which he did not chaff him in the tone of the *Spectator* (not Steele's and Addison's), or of the minister's of Bethesda, in which he did not howlingly describe his destiny hereafter. So he got well advertised by all his rivals; and there was not a creature to whom he spoke who could easily resist a friendly simplicity that seemed pure and open. I believe it always was. Laxman's faith in Rome being absolute, he was invariably true to that faith.

Well, all the parish crowded to St. Peter's to see how Simplicius Laxman would look in the gorgeous apparel of an abbot, which probably his rival clerics would gladly have

worn if they might. All the parish came—ay, and much more of West London. It was a great day, a grand service. Patti and Tietjens and Nilsson were in the choir, and sang their loveliest. The effect was electric. The *Times* got its youngest and freshest leader-writer to expatiate on the topic.

And at a late hour, when the Abbot of Corinth, having given his first dinner in the refectory to illustrious ecclesiastic guests, retired to his own *sanctum sanctorum*, to finish with . . . no matter, he thought to himself that he had made a success.

He sipped a glass of some canonical liquid—there was a rosy flush in it, and the glass was true Venice—and then took up a book to quiet his mind. A pile of letters lay on the table, but he left them for the present. The volume he opened was a Byron; and he turned to ‘Beppo,’ and read it through

with thorough enjoyment, though he had read it many a time before. Then he turned to ‘Don Juan,’ and dipped here and there into that mighty ocean of poetry, passion, epigram, and satire.

‘Why do the English people profess to prefer Shakespeare to Byron?’ he said to himself. ‘Because he is not dramatic. Then one ought to prefer Aeschylus to Homer, and Terence to Horace.’

The new Abbot leaned back in his chair and soliloquised. That day he had made a winning move, and caused a sensation in London and throughout England, which would resound amid the hills of Rome and vibrate in the Vatican. He was satisfied with himself. He sat building a vision of his future, which might or might not be as unsubstantial as that of Alnaschar. However, in due time he thought of going to bed, and, as a preliminary, just turned over

his heap of letters to see if any looked worth opening.

Reader, if you are a popular Ritualist, or Spurgeonist, or Spiritualist, your correspondence will not equal in quantity that of the popular Catholic priest. He almost equals the newspaper editor—the man who of all men has chief reason to heap maledictions upon Rowland Hill.

Tossing his heap of letters over—knowing some by their handwriting, some by their crests or monograms, some by the special perfume that had travelled through the post with them—he came on one from Eustace Theyre. The news which it contained struck him as important. Draxfell was awakened from its long quietude. The old Manor-house was full of guests, full of light, alive with servants. Tom and Jack Drax had returned, and had dispensed with his services in teaching the children, after pressing

on him a present, which he reluctantly accepted.

They had received him most cordially, and invited him to dinner. He understood that the children were to receive instruction elsewhere. Was it worth his while to remain any longer, as his health was as good as could ever be expected ?

One of the visitors was Lord Brodspeare, and another a Mrs. Courtenay, who seemed to be very rich, and to have great influence over the elder Mr. Drax.

These were the chief items of information in the letter.

An answer was sent that Eustace Theyre was to wait yet for further orders, and in the meantime to watch what was going on, and, if possible, to become friendly with Mrs. Courtenay.

The pale priest was ready to obey Father Laxman implicitly, and thought any means to

carry out his orders were justifiable. Therefore it is not astonishing that a couple of days after the scene between Lord Brodspeare and Adela Courtenay, a letter reached the Abbot, informing him that there appeared to be a secret intrigue between those two, though it was currently reported in the village that Mr. Drax was going to marry the lady.

‘ Ah ! ’ said Father Laxman, ‘ that young rascal Brodspeare at his usual game. I shouldn’t wonder but when he has had his fling, and is reduced to a state of weakness and repentance, that he will turn to us for consolation.’



CHAPTER IV.

BLUE SPECTACLES.

HE brothers, with their visitors, had been about a fortnight at Draxfell, when Tom began to feel that he could go on no longer without ‘having it out with his brother.’ He had given Jack several opportunities of being the first to speak, but Jack took no heed of them. At last he said one morning :

‘Well, Jack, how long do you think of staying here ?’

‘I’m sure I don’t care,’ said Jack. ‘I leave it to you.’

‘That’s just like you,’ said Tom. ‘You never will have an opinion of your own when you’re wanted to. You must know whether you want to stay or go.’

‘That’s exactly what I don’t know,’ said the provoking Jack ; ‘but I’m ready to do whatever you like. I’m only your visitor, you know.’

‘Not a word of that, Jack, mind. I won’t stand it, I really won’t. I always told you I wouldn’t, and I can’t think what you’ve brought the old subject up again for.’

Here was a splendid opportunity for Jack to say something of a future mistress, but Jack wouldn’t see it.

‘Well, I suppose we must settle about the children before we go anywhere else,’ said Jack. ‘Old Timothy’s been putting on a long face, and Keziah talks as if we were all going to be carried away by Romish

priests and put into dungeons, and the property taken.'

'Couple of old fools,' said Tom. 'I don't believe that poor fellow did a bit of harm; he's as innocent as a child. Is he still in the neighbourhood ?'

'Yes, I met him the other day in the park. He said he hoped he might still walk there, though he could no longer be of use to the children in any way. I told him to go just where he liked in the grounds.'

'Well, what are we to do with the children?' said Tom, anxious to come round to his point.

'I don't quite see what we're to do,' said Jack.

'Now, really, Jack,' said Tom, 'you are too bad. You say something must be done with the children, and you can't say what. You don't help with an idea at all.'

‘I suppose they’d better have a tutor as we did, Tom.’

‘But we were boys, and one of ours is a girl, and I suppose girls want some one to look after them besides a man, don’t they?’

‘Well, let’s have a governess for Clara, and a tutor for Charlie. Will that do?’

‘I suppose that might do; but what if we want to go away?’

‘Why, then the children would be all right with the tutor and governess.’

‘But it’s rather awkward, isn’t it, Jack, to make such an arrangement?’

‘Well, I suppose it is,’ said Jack; ‘but I don’t see any other course, except schools.’

‘No,’ said Tom promptly, ‘they shan’t go to school. Clara made me promise that. What are we to do? Now, Jack, do for once help me with an idea.’

Jack always had to find the ideas, but when

they were found, Tom fancied he found them himself.

'Shall we consult somebody else?' said Jack gleefully, as if he had hit on a brilliant idea.

Tom thought this a fine chance for bringing on his subject.

'Yes,' he said promptly. 'Whom shall we consult?'

'Blethin,' answered Jack.

Tom looked disappointed.

'I should hardly think Blethin understood children,' he said.

'But who else is there?' said Jack.

'I don't know,' said Tom. 'Oughtn't we to ask some lady's advice about Clara?'

'Perhaps we ought,' said Jack.

'Confound him!' thought Tom, 'how thick he is not to see what I am driving at.'

'Hang it!' thought Jack, 'he's determined to make me mention her first.'

'Suppose we ask Mrs. Courtenay,' said Jack.

'Suppose we do,' said Tom.

'Wouldn't it be best for *you* to ask her?' said Jack.

'There you are again, Jack; shifting all responsibility on me.'

'I really think under present circumstances,' said Jack significantly, 'there can be no difficulty about your speaking to Mrs. Courtenay.'

'What do you mean?' said Tom.

'I mean that I am sure she'll listen to anything *you* have to say.'

'She'd be more likely to listen to Blethin,' said Tom.

'Would she!' sneered Jack. 'Blethin's all things to all women. Why, 'twas only the other day he was flirting desperately with that little girl at Blethin — nursery governess, or something of that sort. All

pretty faces are the same to him. No ; Mrs. Courtenay may smile on him, but she does something more to you, Tom.'

' Does she ?' said Tom.

Tom thought that was enough on the subject at present. He had broken the ice, and he dreaded going any further. Besides he had not yet asked Adela to marry him, and he wondered how he should ever manage it ; and the dreadful task of telling Jack about it could be left till he had achieved it. So he hastened to talk on some other topic, and broke out with :

' Talking of that pretty girl at Blethin his lordship was so sweet on, it suddenly occurred to me, Jack, that she was the girl at the bookseller's in the blue spectacles.'

' Nonsense,' said Jack.

He hadn't stopped to think about it, but the old spirit of controversy made him disagree with anything his brother said.

‘I tell you she was the same, for I looked at her in the shop before she put on the spectacles. Goodness knows what use blue spectacles could be in a dingy shop like that, where there’s not light enough to read the titles of the books.’

‘I’m sure you’re wrong,’ said Jack, ‘for look here, it wasn’t so long after we saw her at Blethin, and it isn’t likely she’d be a governess one month, and a bookseller in blue spectacles the next.’

‘Your logic always was bad,’ said Tom.

‘What, quarrelling again?’ said a cheerful voice, and Lord Brodspeare walked in.
‘What’s the matter this time?’

‘It’s only about a girl in blue spectacles,’ said Jack; ‘nothing serious.’

And there the matter might have dropped, but Tom wanted to show that he was right and his brother wrong, so he said:

‘Jack will have it, with his usual logic,

that because a girl was a nursery-governess in Blethin one month, and in a bookseller's shop in blue spectacles the next, she can't be one and the same girl.'

'What do you mean?' said Lord Brodspeare, suddenly becoming very serious.

'Why, don't you remember that pretty girl at Blethin you flirted with—but you flirt with every pretty face, so you can't be expected to remember one from another—'

'Yes,' said Lord Brodspeare eagerly; 'go on.'

'Well, we saw her in a second-hand book shop in blue spectacles—'

'I tell you it wasn't the same,' said Jack.

'But where?' said Lord Brodspeare, not heeding Jack.

'Oh! in some back street there out of the Strand. Where was it, Jack?'

'I don't know the name of the street,'

said Jack, ‘but it isn’t of the least consequence ; what we want is——’

‘Yes, it is,’ said Lord Brodspeare. ‘Now tell me exactly where it was and all about it ?’

Tom and Jack were both rather ‘taken aback.’ It was something unusual to see Lord Brodspeare serious, especially about a woman—and that woman a mere servant. The brothers looked at one another in astonishment, and wondered what it could mean.

‘Can’t you tell me something about it ?’ said Lord Brodspeare impatiently. ‘Any one would think you had both been struck dumb.’

‘Really, Blethin,’ said Tom, ‘I didn’t know a young woman in blue spectacles would turn out to be so interesting.’

‘Confound it all, Tom, tell me something about it.’

‘There’s nothing particular to tell, except that Jack and I were prowling round odd corners and went into a second-hand bookshop where a young woman in blue spectacles served us. What was it we bought, Jack ?’

‘Never mind what you bought. Tell me about this lady.’

‘I don’t see there’s anything to tell, my dear fellow, except that she wore blue spectacles.’

‘And you say she was the same lady I talked to at Blethin ?’

‘Yes ; I say she was, and Jack says not.’

‘Don’t you know the name of the street, or the bookseller’s ?’

‘Oh dear, no !’ said Tom. ‘We just look into likely places for anything good, but we certainly don’t know the names of half the places we go to. It was near the Strand.’



The discussion as to the exact part of the Strand where the street was situated lasted some time, as Jack would keep contradicting Tom ; but at last Lord Blethin got sufficient information to satisfy him, for he knew he had only to go into all the booksellers' shops in that part and ask if Miss Lisle were there. He thought it probable that he should find her in the shop selling books.

The next morning he was up early, and away to London, leaving an apology for his absence and a message that he would probably be back the next day.

‘ What has so suddenly taken Lord Brod-speare to London ? ’ said Adela Courtenay to Tom Drax.

‘ A girl in blue spectacles, as far as I can understand,’ answered Tom.

‘ But, seriously,’ said Adela, ‘ what do you suppose it is ? I heard nothing of it yesterday, and he seems to have left before the

post arrived this morning ; it cannot be for anything he has heard to-day.'

His letters and papers lay unopened on the table.

' Seriously,' said Tom, ' it is a girl in blue spectacles. I can tell you nothing more than that, for I know nothing.'

' But how did you hear anything about a girl in blue spectacles ?'

Tom related the scene of the day before.

The widow knew only too well who the girl was, but said no word. Tom wondered what the expression meant that passed over her face as he finished his story. She was picturing to herself Lord Brodspeare going after a girl in blue spectacles in a bookseller's shop. ' A nice dusty, dirty bit of goods she'll be,' she thought to herself. ' How can he have such low tastes ?'

Presently she put on a pleasant smile, and said :



'It is probably some *protégée* of Lord Brodspearc's whom he is anxious to help, and he had evidently lost sight of her. However, he need not have been in such a hurry and left us so unceremoniously. But Blethin always was so wild and impetuous. He *must* do a thing the moment he thinks of it.'

Tom Drax was rather pleased that anything should have arisen to take Lord Brodspeare away, and leave him in sole possession of the pretty widow. He counted on at least a whole day with her, if not two, and wondered whether he should get courage enough to propose to her. He was so accustomed to shifting everything on to Jack's shoulders that the usual phrase, 'Jack might do it for me,' almost rose to his lips ; but he remembered that this was something that Jack couldn't do.

He was even more tender than usual in his manner to Adela, but it was no good ;

the lady was in a most impracticable mood, and nothing pleased her.

At luncheon, Tom timidly started the subject of the children's education, thinking Jack would help him ; but Adela remarked that it required great consideration, and she would not like to be responsible for any advice offered, as the children were so wild and unlike others, and would want very careful management. Tom felt that he could say nothing more, and by dinner-time had become so low spirited that he said :

' It's very tiresome of Blethin to run off in this way just when he's wanted. I wish he wouldn't do such odd things. If he doesn't come back to-morrow I shall telegraph.'

' That's no good,' said Jack, ' for he's sure not to go to Blethin House.'

' This never would have happened, Jack, if you had not insisted in quarrelling over that girl in blue spectacles. It's all your doing,



and now we don't know when we shall get him back.'

Adela condescended to be in a little better temper during the evening, but she did not succeed in entirely bringing back Tom to his allegiance. He had made up his mind that when Blethin was away nothing went right, and Adela would have to exert all her charms to alter his mind now; and this she did not seem inclined to do, or rather could not, for she was burning with jealousy and disappointment. And with such feelings racking her, even the most beautiful woman will lose her charms. Adela's gaiety and freshness were gone. Dulness is catching. The brothers were soon as dull as their visitor, and they instinctively felt that Lord Brodspeare's absence had made the change, so his return was eagerly looked for.

Adela was glad to get away to her room at night, and give way to the passions

that she had been trying to smother all day.

So many thoughts troubled her. That he should find the girl whom she hoped was lost, and all through that stupid Tom and Jack. That he should go away without saying a word to her about it. That he should choose this girl, a bookseller's drudge, in preference to her, Adela Courtenay. (She never thought of herself as Mary Zeal.)

This was the worst of all. If he had chosen some highborn beauty, she could have borne it; at least, she thought so. But that a wretched little drudge should be preferred before her was intolerable.

Then she had had another annoyance that morning—a minor one—in the form of a letter from a poor relation, of whose existence she did not care to be reminded. This was a Miss Best, a daughter of her father's sister. She had Adela's tact and cleverness, and had



managed to educate herself sufficiently to pass as a lady, but not Adela's beauty ; so she had not been fortunate enough to make a good match. She was some few years older than Adela, and had managed to persuade her cousin to provide her with sums of money from time to time. When Adela became her own mistress, she worried her so much with letters offering to come and live with her, and bemoaning the hardships of her life (she had a comfortable situation as lady-house-keeper), that Adela made a settlement on her, to be paid quarterly.

She hoped this would end any intercourse between them ; but Ellen Best was not going to be so easily put down. She had a rich relation, and she took care to let the world know it. She was a gushing young woman, and was accustomed to write periodical letters to her dearest Adela. Her dearest Adela would much rather have been without those

letters, but was afraid to offend a woman who had the secret of all her early life.

On this occasion the letter was gushingly reproachful. Miss Best had heard, probably had seen in the fashionable news, which she was fond of reading, that Adela had been staying in town, and had departed for Draxfell. ‘And oh, you naughty, naughty dear,’ she wrote, ‘not to tell me you were so near, that I might come to see you. Who would dream of your being in London in September? And that dear naughty man Lord Brodspeare was there. Of course he followed you. When is the event to come off, dear?’

‘Vulgar wretch!’ exclaimed Adela as she read the letter over again at night, and tore it up and threw it in the fire.

Adela got into a train of thought as she undressed. She went from one thing to another, and her face brightened a little as she seemed to pass from thought to thought.



Finally, she said to herself, ‘ Well, if I do marry Tom, Ellen will be useful to tame those little bears ; and perhaps Jack will take a fancy to her, though she’s not handsome, poor girl.’



CHAPTER V.

YOU PLAY ME FALSE.

MIRANDA. Sweet lord, you play me false.

FERDINAND. No, my dear'st love,
I would not for the world.

The Tempest.

 WHEN Mr. Kershaw returned to his shop in Limbo Row, he found everything to his satisfaction, except Florence's face.

'My dear young lady,' he exclaimed when he walked suddenly into the shop after his fortnight's absence, 'why those ugly spectacles? I hope nothing has happened to your eyes.'



‘No,’ said Florence, laughing and taking off the glasses. ‘I thought them more business-like. I fancied some people came in to gossip, instead of buying books. They evidently had not a sufficient sense of my importance, so I thought a pair of spectacles would add a little dignity to my appearance, and show that I was bent on business only ;’ and she gave a merry laugh.

‘Ah !’ said the old man rather sadly ; ‘I see what you mean. I am to blame in the matter for not thinking of this beforehand.’

‘Oh no, sir, you are not,’ she said. ‘I can assure you I have got on very well. Do not be troubled about me. I have been quite happy.’

He looked round the place, and read the list of books sold, and then looked at Florence in admiration.

‘Miss Lisle, you have done well ; I cannot thank you enough.’

‘I have only done my duty,’ she replied, and was happy in doing it.’

‘But I fear the work has been hard for you. You look pale and tired. You must take a little holiday.’

‘No, I am not tired,’ said Florence; ‘and I can go on for a long time without a holiday.’

Yet she was thinking all the time of her beloved sea, and wishing she could get a glimpse of it.

‘I am sure, my dear young lady, that two or three days of fresh country air would do you good, and put some colour into your face. Have you any friends in the country?’

‘I have a friend who could take me there?’ said Florence.

The temptation of fresh air to Florence, who had spent all her life in the country, was too great to be resisted.

‘Then, my dear young lady, let me place

for you to leave. Suppose we say Saturday, for that will give Sunday as an extra day?"

"Oh, thank you very much!" said Florence, "but you do not owe me anything, for I have only been here six or seven weeks."

"But you have been doing my work as well as your own for the last fortnight, and you must allow me to remunerate you."

So it was settled that Florence was to go on Saturday, and return on the following Wednesday.

"And don't be particular to a day," said the old gentleman; "if you would like another day or two, pray take it."

Mr. Kershaw was a good-hearted man, but he expected a great deal from any one he employed. Florence had more than answered his expectations. He was delighted with her intelligence, and he began to reproach himself because he thought she

had been doing more than her young frame could bear, and because he had left her exposed to the gaze of rude men.

Florence wrote that evening to Betty, and told her of the holiday, and concluded by saying :

‘And now, you dear Betty, I must insist on your taking me somewhere to see the sea, and you can leave the lodgers to take care of themselves. Mr. Kershaw has been very liberal to me, so we must get to the sea somehow.’

This was read over to Betty by her ‘third-floor,’ and at the end she exclaimed :

‘Dear me, we must manage it somehow ; but what is to become of the lodgers ?’

Betty couldn’t dream of leaving the magnificent Mr. Montgomery to the mercies of the little servant, who never could make more of his name than Mr. Gummery.

'We had better consult them,' said the 'third-floor.'

The second floor was occupied by two 'gentlemen,' who spent their days in an 'establishment' in the city, and got a bed and breakfast at Betty's. These could be easily managed, but the great Mr. Montgomery required a little extra cooking, which Betty feared the charwoman she was accustomed to employ, who was to be left in the house, could not accomplish.

However Mr. Montgomery condescendingly assured Betty that he should manage very well during her absence. The 'third-floor' said very sadly that of course *he* should manage well enough; and then he muttered something about being used to a lonely life.

'I should have thought now,' said Betty, 'that a day or two away from all the old books would do you good.'

‘So it would,’ said the ‘third-floor;’ ‘I have often thought lately I’d take a holiday.’

He hardly dared to suggest that he should accompany them.

‘Then why not take it now?’

‘If the sweet young lady has no objection to my presence I should be glad to join you. I might perhaps be of service in protecting you.’

Betty did not look as if she wanted much protection.

So it was all arranged, and this very odd-looking trio got into a second-class carriage for Broadstairs on Saturday afternoon, all very happy at the thought of so soon seeing the sea.

Now, when Lord Brodspeare left Drax-fell, it happened to be the Wednesday on which Florence was expected back at Limbo Row. He had some little difficulty in

finding the shop, as it was a haunt of second-hand booksellers. He walked up and down looking in the shops, hoping to catch sight of the blue spectacles.

At last he went into one, and inquired if Miss Lisle were employed there. No, she was not. He got the same answer at another. He went to a third, when he was answered rather roughly by a coarse-looking man.

‘No, we don’t keep women here to attract customers ; we do a respectable trade. I suppose it’s the girl in blue spectacles you want ; I don’t know her name, but all the men are after her ; the spectacles are only a blind to make believe she’s respectable, but she’s a regular young hussy, I’ll be bound.’

‘And pray where is she to be found ?’ said Lord Brodspeare in such a tone that the coarse man gave a second look at him, and wondered what ‘mighty swell’ he was.

‘At old Kershaw’s there, three doors down.’

Lord Brodspeare walked into Kershaw’s, and found the old gentleman in the shop.

Now, the bookseller had already some experience of the sort of men who came lounging in the shop for the sake of seeing Florence. Many years of bookselling had taught him to know book-loving people by sight, and he could generally judge from the appearance of people what sort of books they wanted. He had been much amused with young fellows who came in, wanting nothing in particular, and making small purchases. Therefore, he was quite ready to be suspicious, and not too ready to answer questions concerning Florence.

Lord Brodspeare found it difficult to get on with him. He was about to mention who he was, thinking Mr. Kershaw would then be more open with him ; but he remem-

bered that he had always defied the opinion of the world, and allowed society to say very damaging things of his character. Clearly it would not improve matters to give his name at present.

‘I am sure Miss Lisle will be glad to see me, if you will only allow her to do so,’ said Lord Brodspeare. ‘Can you not tell me when I am likely to find her, or where she is at present, or any address that will find her?’

‘I certainly cannot say where she is or where she could at any time be found, except here. She may be here on Friday. I doubt much whether she will return before.’

Lord Brodspeare went away discontentedly. He had been accustomed to have things his own way all his lifetime, and he found that money would open most gates. But here he was foiled by a bookseller. However, he had found little Florence, and he would take care not to lose her again. There could be

no difficulty now, he thought, for if she once knew he was anxious to see her, surely she would be glad enough to see him.

'I'll soon take her out of that hole,' he thought. 'Fancy that bright young creature being buried alive there! and I wonder why she wears hideous spectacles, poor child! Perhaps to keep the dust and dirt from her eyes. I wonder whether those wretched bonnet-making people sent her away because I talked to her. I shouldn't wonder. It's an odd world, and I've got a bad name in it.'

He slept in town that night, but was restless, and rushed down to Draxfell early in the morning, much to Tom Drax's delight.

Florence reached Limbo Row about three hours after Lord Brodspeare had left it. She was looking well and rosy for the change. Mr. Kershaw said no word of Lord Brodspeare's visit till night, when, as they were taking supper together, he said :

‘A gentleman has been here inquiring for you, to-day.’

‘Indeed!’ she said. ‘Who can it be, I wonder? Perhaps some friend of my father’s; but I don’t think any of them know I am here. I have not told any gentleman my address here. I don’t know who it can be.’

‘Probably some gentleman who saw you here while I was away, and would perhaps like to make your further acquaintance,’ said Mr. Kershaw pleasantly.

‘But did he know my name?’ said Florence.

‘Oh, yes!’ replied the bookseller; ‘he was anxious to know when you would be back, and said he was sure you would be glad to see him.’

‘Who can it be?’ said Florence, the blood mounting to her face; for several thoughts passed quickly through her mind. Could it be one of the men who came to stare at her so frequently while Mr. Kershaw was away?

What would Mr. Kershaw think of her? Could it possibly be that Lord Brodspeare's friends who bought the books had recognised her, and told Lord Brodspeare of her whereabouts. Yes, that must be it.

'Do you remember what he was like?' she said.

'Yes; he was a middle-sized man, rather fair, with a commanding manner. But you can see for yourself on Friday who he is, for I told him you would be back then, and he said he should probably call again. He seemed very anxious to see you.'

Florence went to bed with something to think about. Her first feeling was delight at seeing Lord Brodspeare again. She longed to tell him how she admired his sonnets, and how much greater a man he seemed to her now than he did when she saw him before.

How delighted he would have been had he

known there was at least one person who cared for him as a poet more than as peer.

Then she thought how she would tell him of all the wicked things the people of Blethin said. But suddenly she checked her happy thoughts. Were not those people at Blethin right to a certain extent, at least? They knew the world and she did not, and their experience was that noblemen were not interested in young girls without meaning harm. Yes, she must come back to her former decision, that it was right for her to work honestly for her living, and not allow a nobleman to come running after her.

And although she persuaded herself this was the right decision to arrive at, she could not help crying over the disappointment of not seeing her hero; for she had quite determined that she must not see him.

If she thought she was right why did she cry? for virtue is its own reward, and the

knowledge of doing right should have brought happiness? But somehow she felt very unhappy, and cried for a long time till she fell asleep, and had a confused dream wherein Lord Brodspeare and the 'third-floor' were very much mixed up.

In the morning she had a difficult task to perform. She wanted to ask Mr. Kershaw to allow her to leave him altogether, but felt that this would appear ungrateful after his kindness to her. She could find no possible excuse for leaving that would not make the act appear an ungrateful one. So she resolved to tell the truth, at least so much of it as was necessary.

She commenced her unpleasant task just as they finished breakfast.

She said she knew she was throwing away a comfortable home, and was not likely to get such another, but there was no help for her.

'But my dear young lady,' said Mr. Kershaw, 'you are likely to have annoyances of this kind for many years to come. It is no good to run away from the men; you must laugh at them, and send them off till the right one comes. I can take care of you while you are under my roof. Be persuaded by me. Stay here, and let me manage any man that comes after you. I will see this gentleman on Friday for you.'

'But he must not know where I live,' said Florence. 'I had much better go.'

'You know who he is then?' said Mr. Kershaw.

'Yes; it is Lord Brodspeare.'

'Lord Brodspeare!' said the old gentleman.

And he made such a peculiar sound and showed such a long face that Florence was more determined than ever to go.

'Well, my dear young lady, you know

est. Do as you think proper, but look
pon me as a friend. If you stay, I will
efriend you against any number of lords,
hough they are as bad as Lord Brodspeare.'
Florence winced at this.) 'If you go, I'll
lo anything in my power to help you in any
vay; you can always look on me as a
riend.'

'Thank you,' said Florence, and she
hurried out of the room to hide her emotion.

It was not feelings of gratitude she wanted
to hide, though at any other time she would
have been grateful enough for Mr. Kershaw's
offer of friendship; but she was hurt and
angry at what had been said of her hero.

She went into her room and stood by the
window that overlooked the Surrey hills, her
bright face darkened with anger, and her
fingers clutched in one another so tightly
that she bruised them.

'Why do they all say he is bad?' she said to herself. 'He is not; he cannot be; they are wrong. I will stay and see him, and tell him what these wicked people say of him, and ask him if it is true.'

She cried till she had exhausted her rage and passion; and then she thought that a good man like Mr. Kershaw would not tell a lie, and that if everybody said Lord Brod-speare was bad, she supposed he was.

'And I suppose I like bad people,' she said, 'for I do like him.'

Then she began to pack up her possessions. A little store of books was the most valued part of them. As she placed her 'Shakespeare' in the trunk, she said to herself:

'Yes, he is still my hero; I always thought he was like "Ferdinand," and I shall still think so. I am so glad I don't know what he has done that is so very wicked.'

Then suddenly an idea occurred to her, for she took out her ‘Shakespeare’ again, and looked carefully through the ‘Tempest,’ and then copied down something, put it in an envelope, and addressed it to Lord Brodspeare.

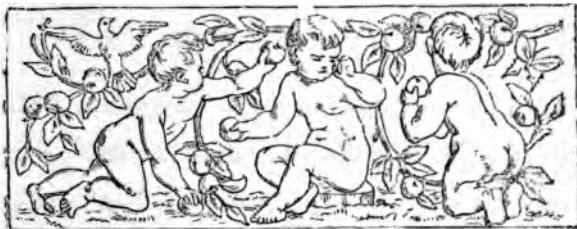
When she had finished her preparations she went down to Mr. Kershaw. He again asked her to reconsider her decision, but she noticed that he was not so urgent since he had heard Lord Brodspeare’s name. He evidently considered Lord Brodspeare was a man to fly from.

Just as she was leaving, she put a letter into Mr. Kershaw’s hand and asked him to deliver it to Lord Brodspeare should he call. This rather mystified him, but he believed Florence to be a good girl, and supposed she knew what she was about in writing to Lord Brodspeare.

She thanked him over and over again for

all his kindness, and regretted being obliged to leave such a happy home. Mr. Kershaw again repeated his promise of befriending her at any time. Then the cab drove off containing little Florence and all her possessions.

She was received with open arms by Betty, who was only too glad that she had come away from all the ‘nasty old books.’



CHAPTER VI.

ANGER AND JEALOUSY.

“ What’s jealousy !—Self-love in masquerade.
It means your greedy heart, while you are deck’d
In generous pride for me ; and sometimes cloak’d
With darkened fancies in a tyrant’s mood,
To worry me with false anxieties.
Go to a mirror !—look at your bad face !”

R. H. HORNE.

ORD BRODSPEARE did not approve of the state of affairs at Draxfell when he returned. Adela was annoyed with him and took care to let him know it. Tom Drax welcomed him almost fiercely, hardly knowing whether most to reproach him for leaving them or to

praise him for coming back so soon. He thought he had better try and restore order before announcing his intention of going again the next day.

'And how is your blue-spectacled bookseller?' said Adela, the moment she was alone with Lord Brodspeare.

'Do you allude to Miss Lisle?' he said severely.

'I do.'

'I have not seen her.'

'Then you were disappointed in your love-chase. We shall soon have society full of the scandal. Lord Brodspeare rushes away from his friends, when he is on a visit, to go after a girl in a bookseller's shop, in some out-of-the way street that no one has ever heard of. Pleasant!'

They were in the library, she standing in one window and he in another. It was a cold grey day early in November. The wind

was driving the leaves in a many-coloured shower across the grass. Bad temper and dulness seemed to be both inside and outside the house.

‘Really, Adela,’ said Lord Brodspeare, ‘I am afraid the weather does not agree with you. You have been so used to warm climates the last few years that the English winter is too much for you. Let me advise a glass of wine or a cordial. Indeed, I should be inclined to think some medicine might be necessary, as you are evidently suffering from a complaint called “spleen.” I understand it is common in cold, damp climates. Let me recommend you to cure it in time before it gets a complete hold of you.’

‘Blethin, you always try to aggravate me. You know I have cause to complain, when you run away in that fashion without a word to me. It really is rude to me, when you



induced me to come down here ; for, after all, the Draxes are comparative strangers, and it isn't pleasant to be left in this way.'

' Well, I don't know ; but I don't think most people would take you and Tom to be strangers, though you don't seem to have treated him very well during my absence,' said Lord Brodspeare.

' What could I do when the stupid fellow would do nothing but grumble because you were gone. He can't be very much in love if he can't get on without you. I don't know what it is in you, Blethin, but somehow you manage to make every one in a house either very comfortable or very uncomfortable. You have no right to exercise such power over people.'

' Then why do you let me, at least so far as you are concerned ?' he asked.

' Because I cannot help it, as you know only too well. And I am not the only one :

that poor Tom is never happy unless he's dangling after you everywhere,' said Adela in a quick pettish way.

' Ho, ho ! so you're jealous, young lady, are you ? Jealous because Tom cares a little bit for me. But I dare say you are quite aware that Tom would prefer to be dangling after you, as you express it, if you would only give him the chance. No doubt your little attack of spleen had begun yesterday morning, and so your treatment of Tom may not have been altogether amiable. Be advised by me, my dear child, get that attack cured. It is an illness that has a bad effect on the moral constitution as well as the physical. It is caused by the cold. Ugh ! look at the leaves, how they drive across. Wind in the north-east, too. Very unfavourable for your malady.'

' Do leave off that nonsense, Blethin, and talk sense.'



‘I am always talking sense to you, Adela. And the most sensible thing I have said is in advising you and Tom to marry.’

‘What is the good of marrying a man who is completely under your thumb?’ she broke out fiercely.

‘If that is the only drawback,’ he answered, ‘it can soon be removed. I can easily lift the weight of my thumb off Tom. I hope he has not been very much crushed under it. Now, Adela, be sensible, and be kind to Tom. He is only waiting for a little encouragement. I must run up to town to-morrow again.’

‘To-morrow?’ she said, surprised.

‘Yes, to-morrow; and then——’

‘But, Blethin, are you going after that girl?’

‘I think, Adela, it is scarcely necessary for you to trouble yourself about my business.’

‘But do consider what every one will say. It will be all over London, and, of course, get into the papers, as everything does.’

‘It would not be the first time that my doings were all over London and in the papers. You used not to be so very anxious about scandal on my account. You did not complain when our names were coupled in the papers.’

‘That was quite a different thing,’ said Adela. ‘There was nothing dishonourable in that.’

‘And what is there of a dishonourable nature in this, pray?’ said Lord Brodspeare angrily.

‘You don’t suppose the world will credit you with any honourable designs in seeking out a poor shop-girl. The name of Blethin Brodspeare is not so particularly connected with virtue in every one’s mouth, that more

trust should be placed in him than in other men. And what man in such a position could escape without censure?" The sneer on Adela's face at this moment did not become her.

'At any rate, Adela Courtenay should hardly be the first to throw the stone,' said Lord Brodspeare.

Adela had certainly given quite cause enough for scandal, as scandal goes. A widow is allowed a good deal of license, and she had taken all, and perhaps more than was allowed. But she took very good care that her name was always connected with fashionable or high-born people; so there seemed to her a considerable difference between her case and this affair of Lord Brodspeare's. And then it particularly hurt her pride, for the world had coupled her name with Lord Brodspeare's. She could imagine how people would sneer as they

remarked : ‘ Brodspeare has tossed over his widow for some girl he has picked up in a shop,’ or how her enemies would say, ‘ he has got tired of the widow ; she’s probably gone off very much.’

Adela tried very hard to hope against hope, and to believe that Lord Brodspeare would not go up to town. She used all her arts to keep him, but when they said good-night, and she found he really meant going, she knew that he was in earnest, and it was hopeless for her. They had been talking at dinner about leaving England and getting away from the cold, for it had been the first really cold day, and every one felt it. Their spirits rose when the lamps were lighted and the shutters closed, and they began to consider what must be done to escape the cold. None of the party had spent the last half-dozen winters in England, and were therefore not prepared for such a

day as this. Adela was concerned about her complexion, which was looking somewhat blue, and had not ventured outside the house all day. Tom and Jack both made remarks on the weather which were not at all polite, though contrary to their usual custom they both agreed; for one said it was ‘beastly,’ and the other ‘infernal;’ and Lord Brodspeare said that he thought a little of the infernal element would be an improvement.

All agreed that the sooner they could get away the better, and they began discussing their various plans. There were at least two of the party who were a good deal puzzled to say what their plans were. The main idea in Lord Brodspeare’s mind was Florence Lisle, whereas Tom’s most engrossing thought was Adela. Jack had the children on his mind, and Adela’s schemes depended on circumstances. After many things had

been proposed, Lord Brodspeare said, rather significantly, looking at Tom and Adela, that he hoped by the time he returned everybody would have settled their plans.

‘And shall you have settled yours?’ said Adela.

‘Probably,’ he answered.

So when Adela went to bed that night her last hope had departed, and she determined to carry her plans, already made in case of failure with Lord Brodspeare, into effect. These were to marry Tom, to place the children under the care of her cousin, and to keep both herself and Tom out of Lord Brodspeare’s way. She never doubted being able to carry them out. She had always been successful in all her schemes and ambitions, which had been neither few nor small—except concerning Lord Brodspeare—him she found impracticable.

The next day Lord Brodspeare left for

town by the early train, so that he could not appear at the breakfast ; but Tom did not miss him on this occasion, for Adela was in one of her most charming moods.

He went straight to Limbo Row, never dreaming of any difficulties concerning Florence. He thought it just possible that she might not be in, or that the old gentleman might be ‘crusty,’ but he meant to see her somehow, and to remain in town till he did.

He walked into the shop and greeted Mr. Kershaw.

‘Is Miss Lisle at home to-day?’ he said.

‘No,’ said Mr. Kershaw, looking searchingly in his face to see where was the badness with which the world credited him ; but he could see nothing but what looked bright and honest. ‘Are you Lord Brod-speare?’

‘Yes, I am.’

‘Then I have a letter for you from Miss Lisle.’

Lord Brodspeare’s heart sank. What could it mean? He tore open the envelope and read on a sheet of paper these six words only :

‘*Sweet lord, you play me false.*’

Ferdinand’s answer rose to his mind in a moment, but where could he send it? He turned the paper over and looked at it on all sides, and then looked in the envelope to see if anything more were written. No, not another word.

‘Is Miss Lisle here?’ he said.

‘No, she left me yesterday.’

‘Left all together, do you mean?’

‘Yes, my lord.’

‘Where has she gone?’

‘I really do not know.’

‘But surely she has a home somewhere?’

‘I suppose so. I understood she lived at Islington, but I cannot give her address. She would probably have given it to you in her letter had she wished you to know it.’

‘Yes,’ said Lord Brodspeare, ‘she is evidently anxious, poor child, to keep out of everybody’s way; but it is a great mistake on her part. I came across her accidentally, and have reason to believe she is related to me, and I should be only too glad to claim a right to help her. If you know anything of her, Mr. Kershaw, or where she can be found, I should be much obliged if you would communicate with my solicitors. I am sure you must take some interest in her, no one could help doing that, who had been brought in contact with her.’

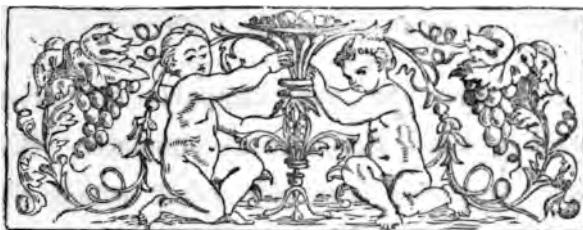
‘Yes, my lord,’ said Mr. Kershaw, ‘I took great interest in the young lady, and, to speak plainly, I could not help being angry with you for being the cause of her leaving me. If you really mean to be of service to her, I will do what I can to help find her. I begged her to come to me if she ever wanted a friend, or recommendation anywhere, so it is just possible she may do so, and I will at once communicate with your lordship’s solicitors, if you will give me the address.’

The address was given, and Lord Brod-speare walked out of the shop and again looked at those six words, written in such pretty little round characters.

‘What a true little lady she is!’ he said to himself; ‘she believes in me, I know, but some vile wretches have told her that I’m bad, and mean harm to her. I dare say that vulgar bonnet-making woman

quite frightened her. What shall I do now?"

He decided to see his solicitor in the morning and ask his advice as to what steps to take.



CHAPTER VII.

LORD BRODSPEARE'S ADVERTISEMENT.

A VERY strange thing it may appear to many that a rich nobleman should care to seek out a poor little nursery governess or bookseller's assistant—as strange as it did to Adela Courtenay. She, having herself been born of the people, valued high birth, and could not understand a man of Lord Brodspeare's position being so much in love as to ‘make a fool of himself,’ as she expressed it.

But then she was incapable of understanding Lord Brodspeare's character. She could only see that side of it which the world saw, and although she did not, like the world, credit him with unpardonable sins, she took him to be a man fond of pleasure, and living for pleasure only, as she lived herself.

She imagined that to have rank, wealth, a fine house, good looks, and a ready wit, was the utmost ambition of man. Lord Brodspeare had all these. What more could he want, except a wife who would do honour to his name and be an ornament to his table ? This he could easily obtain if he chose, and yet he did not choose, but wanted 'a poor wretched girl from a shop.'

Adela was amazed. She had quite forgotten that Mr. Courtenay could also have chosen a wife from among high-born ladies,

but that he preferred a lady's-maid, or she did not choose to remember it.

'Blethin has always been rather eccentric,' she said to herself; 'perhaps he is a little out of his mind; he must be to do such a mad thing.' And so Adela dismissed him as well as she could from her thoughts, and no doubt many of his admirers, when they heard the story, made the same remark as Adela.

Perhaps none of his acquaintances knew Lord Brodspeare accurately. He was a man who rather hid his character by his actions than disclosed it. Full of wild young blood, he had been unable to settle down steadily in England when he came into the estates on his majority. His guardians—of whom his uncle was one—were not men who were able to exercise any influence over him. His uncle and cousin—with whom he had made

his home during his minority—were very different in disposition from himself. They were careful, managing people, who counted every sixpence ; their names figured much in lists of patrons of public charities ; they went regularly to church, and kept their parish in a state of pauperism and dependence by an organised system of alms-giving, and they altogether presented a very respectable appearance in aristocratic society.

Perhaps it is scarcely to the honour of our hero that he regarded his cousin as a ‘mean, canting young humbug ;’ the cousin, in return, regarding Lord Brodspeare as being a ‘lost man,’ the latter expression gaining point by being accompanied with a turning up of the eyes and a lifting up of the hands.

Now, whether Lord Brodspeare or his cousin were right, is a mere matter of

opinion. The reader may settle it for himself. 'Tis certain that the cousin would never have made such a fool of himself as to marry a nursery governess. No foolish passion will ever get the better of him ; he is complete master of himself.

The dispositions of the uncle and cousin had so affected Lord Brodspeare, that instead of following their example and excellent advice [for they never lost an opportunity of giving advice] he seemed to take delight in doing and saying what would shock them. The restraint which he had seen in the society with which his uncle surrounded him, made him long for freedom, and perhaps that induced him to leave England as soon as he could. He was unfortunate in having for his followers and associates when abroad, people who were fascinated by him and flattered him, and were, of course, inferior in intellect to himself. But there was some-

thing good in him, which must come to the surface in time, however much it was smothered. While there was so much effervescence to quiet down, so much steam to blow away, it was not easy to see what was underneath.

His eagerness to marry Florence [for he was now determined to marry her directly he could find her, to save any further difficulties] perhaps arose from an instinct that she was the one person who would bring out the better part of him; or it may only have been because of the difficulty in finding her, for Lord Brodspeare was not accustomed to be foiled in anything. At any rate, it is probable that Florence understood him better than any one else. She set him up as her hero, and decided that whether good or bad, he was worth loving.

When Adela reckoned up his various qualities, she forgot the one little item of a

heart. Heartless herself, she was likely to make the omission. In fact, she left out the man himself—the soul. She put together so much material—the substance enveloping the man, and belonging to him—but she forgot the real man.

When Lord Brodspeare thought of offering marriage to Florence, it did not occur to him that he was going to offer title, estate, money, a handsome face, all that the world would count as Lord Brodspeare. It was himself he was going to offer, that part of him that the world knew nothing about, and whose existence it did not suspect.

But at present his chances of making such an offer seem small. He wonders how she is to be found in the ‘wilds of Islington.’

He went early on Saturday morning to call on Messrs. Sharp and Short—a firm of solicitors whom he occasionally employed in any little matters—for, as he said, he did

not want the family solicitors to know all his affairs, and tell them to his cousin. He was fortunate in finding young Mr. Sharp in. This young gentleman showed great aptitude for business, but an equal aptitude for pleasure, and generally considered Saturday a day to be devoted entirely to pleasure, therefore seldom appeared at the office. But he was there on this occasion, and only too glad to be of service to Lord Brodspeare.

‘I have a very delicate bit of business, Mr. Sharp, which I should like to be undertaken by you entirely ; and in any means you may adopt, it would be better not to allow my name to be known, not even to your father or partners—at least for the present—for the world is so censorious——’

‘Yes, my lord, I quite understand,’ said Mr. Sharp, who had heard what the world had to say of Lord Brodspeare.

‘There is really no reason for secrecy,’

said Lord Brodspeare, who had always defied the opinion of the world, and was a little ashamed of giving in on this occasion, but did it for Florence's sake.

'Just so, my lord, I understand you quite.'

'I wish you to discover the address of a young lady named Florence Lisle, and to let me know immediately you have done so.'

He then gave her history as far as he knew it, and the following description of her: 'Light brown wavy hair; brown eyes; straight nose; delicate complexion; middle height.'

'I hardly see at present how to commence operations, my lord,' said Mr. Sharp, 'unless by advertising. I do not see any harm in that.'

'But how could you do that without giving her name? I do not want to expose her name to the world.'

‘No ; but suppose,’ said the lawyer, ‘some one had come to me with the information that money had been left to Miss Lisle, I should be bound to advertise for her ? Can not I do so under present circumstances ?’

Lord Brodspeare looked doubtful.

‘I don’t want to annoy her,’ he said.

‘But this cannot annoy her any more than an ordinary advertisement would. Let me draw it up, and submit it to you, my lord.’

He wrote out the following :

‘If Miss Florence Lisle will apply to Messrs. Sharp and Short, solicitors, at 1, Hookem Court, Chancery Lane, she will hear of something to her advantage.’

‘Will that do, my lord ?’

‘If you really think this the best mode of proceeding, I suppose it will,’ answered

Lord Brodspeare ; ‘but pray do not spare money for anything you may think well to do in the matter. And if you find her, do not at first mention my name to her, but say, what is quite true, that there is money to come to her from a relation, for I have every reason to believe she is related to me. She has been frightened by some stupid people, and if she hears my name, may be frightened again. This will, I suppose, go in Monday’s *Times*? Put it in any other paper you think proper except the *Morning Post*.’

He was thinking of Adela when he said this, for the *Post* was the only paper she ever looked at, and he did not care to put up with any more remarks from her on the subject. He meant to maintain silence as to his present visit to town.

‘I would not advise its too frequent repetition,’ said Mr. Sharp, ‘it may look

suspicious. Suppose I have no answer during the week, it shall go in again the following Monday.'

'I leave it to you,' said Lord Brodspeare, 'only do the very best you can, and do not spare expense. Telegraph to me at Drax-fell in case of anything satisfactory, and when I leave there I will let you know.'

He walked out of the office, leaving Mr. Sharp to think what he pleased on the subject.



CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE WILDS OF ISLINGTON.

HEN Florence arrived at River Terrace for the second time with all her possessions, Betty was only too glad to receive her. It was useless for her to point out that it was a very serious matter to be without a home and without character, for she could not apply to Mr. Kershaw unless she gave him knowledge of her whereabouts, and then Lord Brodspeare would easily find her.

12 *To Mrs H. F.*

In telling Florry the story of her leaving
London, we do not mention Lord Brod-
espeare's name. She loves him too much to
do that. But she says a gentleman had
come to inquire after her, and she thought it
best to keep out of his way and the way of
other men who had come to the shop, by
telling Florry's address and leaving; and she
suggested that she should seek another situa-
tion which would be more private in which
Florry thoroughly agreed.

'Not that I cannot take care of myself,
Florry dear,' she said. 'But I know it would
give you a great deal of anxiety, and you are
such a dear wise old thing, and I'm taking
your advice you see.'

'Yes, Miss Florry, and just you make
yourself at home as long as you like, and
don't be in a hurry to take the first thing
that comes in the way. We'll be particular
this time, we will, miss, and not let your

pretty face be put for show in any book-seller's shop for all the rude men to stare at.'

'What nonsense, Betty! If I believed all that you and Mr. Third-floor say, I should grow vain. And it's all very fine to talk of picking and choosing, but how am I to get a place in a private house without a character? You know I was very lucky, Betty, in getting Mr. Kershaw's place—it is not every one who would have had me then.'

'I should like to see any one refusing you Miss Florry. They're not likely to see such another in a hurry.'

'If everybody thought so well of me as you do, I should not have much trouble, Betty, but I fear I appear very ignorant to most people.'

'Ignorant indeed!' said Betty, 'I should just like to hear any one say so.'

'Well, you know, Betty, I'm not fit for

anything but a bookseller or nursery governess, and I suppose I must go back to the governess business and mending clothes, that is if anybody will have me.'

'Don't be in a hurry for a bit, Miss Florry.'

'Yes, I am in a hurry, because don't you see, Betty, it's difficult to get a place without giving references, and it will take a long time. Why, I might be left on your hands for months, Betty.'

'And all the better too, miss.'

'No, Betty ; I must look at the papers tomorrow morning and see what advertisements there are.'

When the 'third-floor' came home, Betty rejoiced with him over Florence's arrival, and asked him to lend her some newspapers.

If Florence had been 'spoilable,' it is to be feared that Betty and the 'third-floor' would have thoroughly spoiled her. They both

worshipped her completely. To them she seemed a beautiful creature, too good to bear the rough side of life ; and yet they understood the wonderful power she had of bearing trouble and resisting evil.

Betty Fawdon and Adela Courtenay were a very long way off from each other in opinion. Had Betty heard that Lord Brod-speare sought Florence, she would have doubted were he good enough for her. And could Betty have seen the sneer on Adela's face as she spoke of 'that poor little drudge,' she would have laid violent hands on her.

The 'third-floor' would have considered any nobleman lucky who gained Florence's heart, and he would regard with envy any poet who could write a poem on the subject. He had long been trying to pen some verses on his sweet angel, but his words fell short of his ideas.

Here was this young goddess in a lodg-

house in Islington with her two devout worshippers, and another unknown worshipper willing to spend in discovering her a sum that would astonish any of the dwellers in the lodging-house—even the magnificent Mr. Montgomery. He had seen Florence on the day of her departure for Broadstairs, and had expressed his opinion that she was ‘devilish good-looking,’ but not equal to the one to whom he had offered his hand and heart; namely, one of the ‘young ladies’ in the establishment in Upper Street. Florence was not spoilt by the flattery she received in the house at River Terrace, but while she was here unemployed, she had the more time to think; and she began to feel more than ever the want of some one with whom she could talk familiarly—some one near her own age who understood her, and she was in more danger of falling into unfit company than she was of being spoiled by Betty or

the ‘third-floor,’ for she craved so much for sympathy at this time that she would be likely to make a friend of the first suitable person of her own age.



CHAPTER IX.

PLANS.

KORD BRODSPEARE on returning to Draxfell on Saturday evening, found that at least two of the party had made their plans, or rather had taken an important step in that direction; for Tom Drax had received so much encouragement from Adela Courtenay, that before he went to bed on the previous evening he had found sufficient courage to propose marriage to her; and she, with a

proper amount of feigned reluctance, had accepted him.

Jack hardly knew whether to be sorry or glad. He was glad of a prospect of happiness for his brother, and he felt a certain amount of relief in getting Tom off his hands. For Tom referred everything to Jack, and shifted all responsibility on him, though he continually grumbled at him for not helping in their various schemes. Jack now felt that Adela would take the lead in everything, and that his troubles were at an end.

On the other hand, he was sorry that a break should come in a life with which he was quite satisfied. Although he and Tom were always quarrelling, they were exceedingly fond of each other; and Jack knew now that some one had come between him and Tom, and that henceforward they would probably be separated.

‘I hope you have settled something for the winter, while I have been away,’ said Lord Brodspeare when they were sitting over dessert that evening.

Tom looked at Adela, she looked at him. Then Tom looked at Jack, expecting him to help them answer, but Jack looked across at Adela.

‘All silent!’ said Lord Brodspeare. ‘What does that mean?’

‘I hardly think we have settled anything at all,’ said Adela.

‘At any rate,’ said Jack, ‘I haven’t. They seem to have arranged all between them, and left me out.’

‘What can you mean?’ said Lord Brodspeare, guessing the truth.

‘It’s ridiculous of Jack to say that,’ said Tom, ‘because we’ve proposed nothing yet.’

‘Except marriage,’ said Jack.

‘Marriage !’ said Lord Brodspeare. ‘I wish you joy, Tom ;’ and he got up and shook hands with him ; ‘and you too, Adela,’ and he kissed her. ‘It is the very best thing that can happen for both of you ;’ and he really felt that it was.

‘And have *you* made any plans yet, Blethin ?’ said Adela.

‘Yes, I intend to remain in England for the present, and shall go down to Blethin and look after affairs there a bit.’

This convinced Adela that he was in earnest. She imagined the place was going to be prepared for his bride. She said nothing more, for she thought the subject had better be avoided.

‘When is the wedding to take place ?’ said Lord Brodspeare.

‘What a hurry you’re in, Blethin,’ answered Adela. ‘Twenty-four hours have

not passed, and you can scarcely expect that we have already arranged everything.'

'If I had once resolved to marry, I don't think I should be long in putting it in execution,' said Blethin.

'But we are not all so impatient as you, Blethin,' said Adela.

'I should think you had better marry as soon as you can, and go abroad for your honeymoon,' suggested Lord Brodspeare.

That was just what Tom had been longing to propose, but had not courage. He inwardly thanked Lord Brodspeare, and said very promptly,

'Yes, that would be the best way, for we must really get away from this cold weather.'

Now Adela was in no great hurry to give up her freedom. She enjoyed her position. She had no intention of remaining a widow, or of allowing any one to marry her for her money. She would have liked a title, but

her only chance as yet in that way had been a younger son of a marquis, with an income of a few hundreds, and debts amounting to several thousands. She could command admiration, both for her person and her money ; but she knew well enough that she could not easily find such another worshipper as Tom Drax, a faithful good fellow who would always be her slave.

Still she would have preferred remaining unmarried a year or two longer, could she be sure of having Tom Drax at the end of that time, and had found no one else. However, there was no excuse for putting off the wedding, so she was somewhat puzzled what to do.

In answer to Tom's last remark, she said :

‘ I really must get out of this cold country as soon as possible, and we cannot be married in such a hurry, or all the world will talk.

It will be soon enough when we return in the spring.'

Tom looked disconsolate.

'Or there's no reason why we shouldn't be married abroad,' said Adela, seeing Tom's face.

'Yes,' said Tom, 'that would be splendid. But Blethin ought to be with us.'

'I can't manage it at present, my dear boy,' said Lord Brodspeare, 'but there's no knowing what I may be able to do. The question is what are our plans for the present? We all seem to be in a hurry to do something.'

But no plans were discussed that evening; for Tom was too happy to care to discuss the future, and Lord Brodspeare thought it better to let him enjoy his happiness.

The next morning the rector called. He had been previously, but found no one at home. He was an apathetic man, who did

not trouble himself much with his neighbours' affairs. But the gossips had pointed out to him that it was his duty to speak to the Drax brothers about their children being left in such a state of neglect. A quarrel immediately ensued between Tom and Jack concerning which should receive him, which at the end of a quarter of an hour resulted in Jack's undertaking to do it.

Now Jack quite expected a lecture concerning the children, and he did not feel at all inclined to put up with it ; so, after a few commonplaces between himself and the Rector, he said :

‘Really, I hope you’ll excuse me being in a hurry this morning, I have an appointment ; but will you do us the favour to dine with us, you will then make my brother’s acquaintance.’

‘Thank you,’ said the Rector, ‘I shall be delighted to see Mr. Drax.’

The Rector was not apathetic concerning a good dinner and good wine ; and the account he had heard of wine that lay neglected in the Draxfell cellars for years, had often made his mouth water.

‘ When can you come ? . Will this evening suit you ? I should like to introduce you to Lord Brodspeare.’

‘ Thank you, it will quite suit me,’ said the Rector, and he took his leave.

There was another quarrel between the brothers because Jack had sneaked out of the lecture, as Tom said, and pushed all the responsibility on him.

When the Rector came in the evening, he was too much engaged with a very good dinner to talk about the children ; but when they appeared at dessert, which they were allowed to do in honour of the visitor, he remembered the responsibility that had been laid on him.

Now Charlie and Clara had sometimes been to church with old Keziah; not often, for it was some distance off; and, as Keziah said, her old legs were not equal to it. The Rector had a heavy solemn way of reading out his very uninteresting sermons, and Charlie had been accustomed to sit up in one of his favourite trees and mimic him.

Charlie had never gathered any particular idea of religion by going to church, or any reverence for the edifice or the parson. He could not understand why everybody cared to sit in an ugly place shut up in wooden pews, when they might be out of doors enjoying the sunshine, and the trees, and the song of birds. So he was not prepared to treat his Rector with proper respect.

‘Well, young gentleman,’ said the Rector, after he had made himself comfortable with a glass of the Draxfell port, ‘and what are you going to be?’



‘I think I should like to be a parson,’ said Charlie, rather indistinctly, for he had a large sweetmeat in his mouth ; having, after the manner of boys, crammed in more than his mouth would conveniently hold.

‘Oh, a parson, would you ?’ said the Rector.

‘Yes,’ said Charlie, ‘but not your sort of parson, you know.’

‘Indeed !’ said the Rector.

Every one looked up, for the young priest came into their minds—except Adela, who said to herself :

‘Rude little wretch, to talk like that to a clergyman.’

‘Then what sort would you be ?’ continued the Rector.

‘Why, I shouldn’t preach in an ugly house like you do, and tell the people all that funny stuff that they can’t understand. I should get up into a big tree, and have the

people all round me, and tell them all about what they see round them. Wouldn't it be jolly ? and he stuffed another big sweetmeat into his mouth, quite unconscious that he had made a very rude speech, for which a child in a well-ordered home would probably be whipped.

All were silent for a minute. Adela looked at Tom and Jack, expecting them to reprove the boy or send him out of the room; but to Jack's shame be it said, he did not see that the boy had said anything wrong. However, seeing Adela look at him as if she expected him to say something, he could only echo Charlie's last words, and said :

'Yes, it would be very jolly.'

Adela and the Rector looked horrified.

Lord Brodspeare came to the rescue.

'I am afraid, Charlie,' he said, 'you have not learnt your catechism, and to submit

yourself to your spiritual pastors ; you have a great deal to learn before you become a person.' Then, turning to the Rector, he said, 'Children always will speak out what they think.'

But the Rector was not happy about it. He was not a clever man. He had that heavy gravity of manner which keeps people at a distance, and ensures respect ; a manner that is generally put on to hide some defect. It is not every one that can afford to be natural. The Rector's defect was want of intellect ; but by his gravity he managed to pass amongst his parishioners as a man of deep learning.

Lord Brodspeare was irreverent enough to speak of him afterwards as an 'old fool ;' but Lord Brodspeare was in the minority.

When the gentlemen were alone, Tom Drax made some slight apology for the way in which the boy had spoken to the Rector,

and excused him on the ground of his want of education.

'I consider,' said the Rector in his heavy way, 'you have a grave responsibility resting on you. These children are being allowed to run wild just at the time when their minds are open to impressions of all sorts, and when they most require guidance. They will never be fitted to take their part in the world without education. They take everything too easily. Life is a serious thing — very serious,' and he shook his head gravely, and drank some more port to console himself for the seriousness of life.

Tom and Jack looked uncomfortable. They did not take life seriously themselves, and they could not understand why any one else should.

'Pass the decanter, Jack,' said Tom, seeing the Rector finish his glass, and hoping that in his appreciation of the port he would

forget his subject. But he returned to it.

‘There’s nothing,’ he said, as he poured out the wine, ‘but a good sound training in youth, that prepares one to meet the difficulties of life.’

‘Yes,’ said Lord Brodspeare, ‘the Rector’s right, I suspect. To be in the world and of the world, one must be trained according to worldly ideas, or else one is unfit to cope with all the knavery, and hypocrisy, and cant, and humbug one has to meet.’

‘Eh?—what do you say? I don’t quite follow you, my lord,’ said the Rector, stammering. ‘I think you misunderstand me,’ he continued.

‘I mean,’ said Lord Brodspeare, ‘that life would not be such a very serious thing were there no rogues and hypocrites in the world. It seems to me that a preparation for life is a preparation to avoid evil; though I fear

in many cases it rather leads towards it.'

The Rector took up the argument from a religious point of view, and enlarged much on 'sowing good seed,' till Tom began to yawn ; for, as he afterwards said, 'he couldn't abide a sermon.'

So Lord Brodspeare changed the subject, and they joined Adela in the drawing-room.

When the Rector had gone, his conversation and character were discussed, which led to a remark from Adela that she thought he was quite right concerning the education of the children.

'Then why don't you undertake it, Adela ?' said Lord Brodspeare. 'I am sure you will do it better than any one.'

'I am ready to help if I can,' said Adela, 'but I do not see what can be done at present, unless the children are placed under my care.'

‘We are ready to do that,’ said Jack; ‘eh, Tom?’

‘Yes,’ answered Tom; ‘but I suppose we must wait till you return to England.’

‘No,’ said Adela, ‘there is a cousin of mine who will be the very person to look after them. With the help of a governess and some masters, she would soon get them into order, but they would of course have to be at my house in London.’

‘I don’t know how they’ll like that,’ said Tom.

‘Well, I suppose none of us like the educating process,’ said Lord Brodspeare, ‘but it has to be done.’

So Adela, who had laid all her plans very carefully, now proposed them to Tom and Jack, who overwhelmed her with gratitude for taking the responsibility of the children.

Before the end of that week, Draxfell was once more deserted. Mr. Timothy Radstock

was left in a state of astonishment, and with orders to have the place ready in the spring for Mr. Drax and his bride.

Mistress Keziah Gibbon was left broken-hearted for the loss of the children whom she loved better than any one else in the world.



CHAPTER X.

WANTED, A GOVERNESS.

MISS ELLEN BEST was a tall and rather plain woman of about thirty. There was very little likeness between her and Adela Courtenay who had inherited her mother's beauty. Like Adela she had tact, and could quickly adapt herself to the ways of those about her ; but she had lived only with underbred people, and, imitating their ways, appeared to Adela to be vulgar. She worshipped rank, and was

one of those people who will rush anywhere to get a sight of any member of the royal family. She read the court news in the papers, and regarded it as the most important item ; and she followed the doings of the Princess of Wales with as much interest as if she had been her sister. She studied the Peerage whenever she had an opportunity ; a title was to her surrounded with a halo of romance, and the owner of it something more than an ordinary human being. If there were scandal about a man, or even a woman of title, she would look upon it as interesting and romantic ; though she would lift up her eyes in pious horror at anything of the sort in her own class ; and would quickly turn a servant out of the house who had given cause for suspicion as to chastity of conduct. She had been brought up a Methodist, but finding Methodists unfashionable people, she joined the Church, and, as may be supposed

from her character, soon chose the most fashionable section of the Church.

Her sole idea in life was to be in the fashion in every way—in dress—in ideas—in religion—in conversation—in occupation.

As regards occupation, her chief excitement was the last new novel, and the last new style of antimacassar or other kind of fancy-work. She was really a good needle-woman, and could make a gown or mend stockings very creditably; but such things were done in her bedroom, and she never owned any knowledge of the subject.

She had dark brown hair, brown eyes, a commonplace face, and a straight figure which, with a little art, was made to look elegant.

In fact she was like hundreds of women you may see any day passing in the streets in London—well-dressed, ordinary-looking people—who make no impression on you.

She had a certain amount of strength of will, or she could not have succeeded in raising herself as she had done ; and she had a passion for romance which she had only been able to gratify by reading.

Such was the person that was installed in Upper Ten Street, as guardian of Charles and Clara Drax. She had only too gladly accepted Adela's offer to come to town for the winter, while Adela was away. Arrangements were made for a certain number of servants to be left. Miss Best could not do with too few, for she was one of those people who, having to wait on themselves at home, find out they require a great deal of service when they get the chance of it.

Miss Best had not heard of the engagement ; Adela preferred to be quiet on the subject. She explained that the children were left without a mother's care, and to

please Lord Brodspeare she had undertaken the charge of them.

‘And of course that dear naughty man will be here soon,’ said Miss Best.

‘Not at present,’ said Adela unconcernedly; ‘he is at Blethin, and talks of remaining there for the winter.’

‘No, he’ll never do that, I am sure,’ said Miss Best; ‘he cannot live so long without seeing you; he will be certain to follow you.’

‘Nonsense,’ said Adela. ‘Perhaps I shan’t tell him where I am going.’

‘Oh, darling!’ said the gushing Ellen, ‘don’t say you have thrown him over; I am longing to see you married to him. How charming, how lovely, how sweet it will be to hear you called “Lady Adela.”’

‘What a fool you are!’ exclaimed Adela; ‘you never will understand about courtesy titles. Of course I could never be Lady

Adela unless I were born so. You must be careful not to make those foolish mistakes.'

Then followed a lecture on titles, which Miss Best only partly understood ; but she sacrificed two or three hours of her sleep that night to a study of the Peerage.

Now Adela meant to leave England as soon as she had found a governess and masters for the children, and she imagined that but a few days would be required to do this. However, circumstances arose which rather delayed her departure. She had chosen the necessary masters, and had made some endeavours concerning a governess, but had not yet seen any one who was likely to suit her. The governess was an important item, for not only must she be able to teach the children, but she must be companionable for Miss Best, as they would be naturally much thrown together. There-

fore that lady begged to have a voice in the choosing. She paid some visits with Adela to an institution for governesses, but was not satisfied with any one she saw. They were too pretty or too ugly, or too clever or too ignorant, or too old or too young, or low-born. So they decided to advertise, and the *Times* was considered to be the most appropriate paper. Some time was spent over the wording of the advertisement, for Miss Best was hard to please, but it was gradually resolved into the following :

‘Wanted, a Governess who can teach English to two children, and help to prepare Latin lessons for a master. Age not over thirty. The most unexceptionable references required. Apply by letter, etc.’

‘There,’ said Miss Best, ‘we shall have no end of answers, and we can pick out a

dozen or so of the best, and see them, and I should think we can't fail then.'

And they did have many answers, but for certain reasons they did not require the dozen or so to call as they intended, but fixed on one which did not altogether answer their requirements.



CHAPTER XI.

WITHOUT A CHARACTER.

LITTLE Florence, in the lodgings-house at Islington, had been carefully studying the advertisements in the papers. The ‘third-floor’ did not have the *Times*—it was only papers on certain subjects that he required; but Betty had suggested that Florence should go to a shop in the Upper Street, where the *Times* was taken in, and look at the advertisements.

This she had begun to do on the day after

Lord Brodspeare's advertisement for her had appeared. Had she begun on that day she would probably have seen it, for, not knowing where to find what she wanted, she began at the beginning. After a few days she soon learnt how to turn to the right page at once, and did so without noticing what is called the 'Agony column.'

She answered some, but to no purpose, for she was 'without a character.'

On the day that Adela's advertisement appeared, Lord Brodspeare's appeared also for the second time..

Pretty little Florence went into the shop as usual. The shopkeeper had learnt to look forward to her coming, for she seemed to carry sunshine wherever she went.

'Not found anything yet, miss?' he said, as she went in on that Monday morning Betty had explained to him that she wanted a situation, and had asked him to allow her

to look at the papers without charge. The large-hearted Betty managed to find out large-hearted people.

'No,' said Florence cheerfully. 'I haven't got a character, you know, and nobody will have me.'

'They only want to see your face, miss, to know your character.'

'But everybody doesn't believe in it,' she said, laughing, 'and I cannot show it in a letter.'

Meanwhile the bookseller was looking down the columns to see if there was anything to suit her. He did not know her name, or might have been able to tell her of something that would have suited her.

"Young lady," he read out, "wanted in a butcher's desk." No, that won't do.'

'But what does that mean?' said Florence.
'To keep accounts at a butcher's shop. It wouldn't do for you.'

‘But I think I could keep accounts,’ said Florence.

‘Here’s another,’ said the shopman.
“Young lady wanted to serve in bar.”
No, that won’t do ; they’re all young ladies nowadays. But here’s one, miss. “Wanted a governess who can teach English to two children, and help to prepare Latin lessons.”
Ah, but maybe you don’t understand Latin, miss.’

‘Yes I do, a little,’ said Florence ; ‘my father taught me.’

‘Then this is just the thing.’

‘Let me see,’ said Florence.

‘There, miss.’

She read it over.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘it would do ; but I have no references at all, and they seem to be so very particular. I fear it is no good answering that.’

‘Dear me,’ said the shopman, quite concerned. ‘Couldn’t anything be done, miss. Couldn’t some of your friends write, miss? Now, what can I do? There’s Miss Fawdon, miss—a most respectable lady; she’d write——’

‘Oh! dear old Betty can’t write a line.’

‘Couldn’t I do it for her, miss?’

‘It’s very kind of you; but I don’t think that will be much good; but I’ll copy the advertisement if you will allow me, and perhaps I may answer it.’

Florence walked out of the shop feeling her case was rather a bad one. She had answered several advertisements, and seen several people; but the want of references stood in her way. Excuses were made that she was too young, or did not answer the requirements. One lady to whom she had applied for the place of nursery-governess,

openly told her she was too pretty—a piece of honesty on the part of a woman that is seldom met with.

Florence thought of the blue spectacles which were hanging up in Betty's parlour over the mantelpiece ; but Betty said she never would allow her to wear those abominable things again. She would delight to put them on and dance round the room, to tease Betty.

She was so brave, and true, and good, and had such trust in God, that she was generally hopeful ; but this morning her heart failed her a little. That phrase in the advertisement, ‘the most unexceptionable references,’ had made her realise her position.

So she walked from the Upper Street to River Terrace, thinking all the way what a disadvantageous thing it was to be without a character.



Some who passed her looked at the bright face and figure admiringly, and little thought what troubles she had. Her beauty sometimes tempted some brutal fellow to speak to her as he passed, but she went on bravely enough, not fearing anything.

She tried to think of her father, and how he would encourage her to bear her trouble ; but somehow her thoughts always wandered away to Lord Brodspeare, and she almost wished she could at that moment meet him in the street. He was at Blethin, anxiously waiting for an answer to his advertisement.

Could he have known that Florence was wandering through the Islington streets, in distress at her position, and longing to see him, how he would have hastened to her.

When she reached home she ran in to Betty who was making a pudding for dinner, and said :

‘ Oh, Betty dear ! here’s just the thing ;

but they want—most—unexceptionable—references.'

'What does that mean?' said Betty.

'Why, that means very strict about character; don't you see, Betty; and that dear little man at the shop suggests that you shall give me a character, and he will write it. Now, isn't that fun?'

'And no bad idea either, Miss Florry. But my third-floor might write it, for he do write beautiful.'

'Oh, capital!' said Florence, clapping her hands. 'You give me a character, Betty. I know it will be a good one—won't it?'

'I should rather think so, Miss Florry, for if ever there was a born angel, it's you; abearing up under everything and never grumbling; and such a lady too, as ought to have servants and carriages, and horses, and everything in plenty.'

'Oh, you dear, delightful Betty, why



angels don't want servants and carriages, and horses, because they can fly about when and where they please ; you see, they left my wings out when I was born ;' and she danced round the kitchen. 'But, O Betty !' she said, changing her tone, I really must answer this at once, for it's just the thing, if only they will take you as the—most—unexceptionable — reference. Fancy your being anything so grand, Betty ! Papa would have said unexceptional, but an extra syllable sounds grander.'

'Well, they may use their long words,' said Betty, 'but I could tell them in much shorter ones how lucky they'd be to get you. But don't you go writing now, miss ; you wait till my 'third-floor' comes home. He'll tell us what to do.'

'But suppose I get my letter ready by the time he comes ; for we ought not to waste a minute. I dare say there'll be many answers.'

‘Don’t you fear, miss ; it isn’t every one
as knows that outlandish language your pa
was so fond of.’

But Florence was anxious to get her letter
off her mind, and after many attempts she
wrote the following :

‘**MADAM,**

‘ I can teach English, and know
something of Latin and Greek ; and I would
try to do my duty and please you in every
way. My father was a clergyman, and I
have no reference except from his house-
keeper, with whom I am now living. I shall be
very grateful if you would give me some
employment.

‘ I am, madam,

‘ Your obedient servant,

‘ **FLORENCE LISLE.**



The ‘third-floor,’ when he came home, pronounced this letter to be very pretty, but not suitable if it happened to fall into the hands of commonplace people; nevertheless he remarked :

‘ Let it go, let it go ; there is not too much simplicity in the world that we need discourage it.’

The letter of reference to be concocted between Betty and the ‘third-floor’ was a matter of some difficulty. Betty wanted to describe Florence in the most superlative style, and in phrases which, though not grammatical, were expressive. They might have been particularly expressive in the county of Devon, but to a ‘fine lady’ in London, as the ‘third-floor’ pointed out, they were ‘not quite the thing.’ Betty so insisted on some of them being used that they had to deceive her, and pretend they used them

When Florence came home from her walk to the Upper Street in search of advertisements the next day, she found the following letter addressed to her :

‘ Miss Helena Best begs to inform Miss Lisle that she will be glad to see her on Wednesday, at eleven o’clock precisely.

‘ Upper Ten Street.

‘ Tuesday morning.’

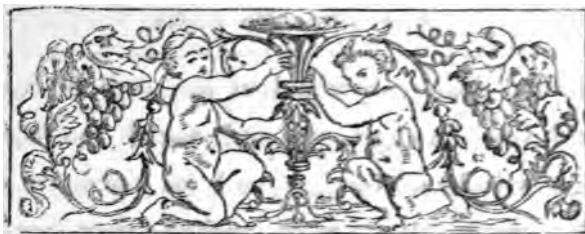
‘ There !’ said Florence, reading it out to Betty in glee ; ‘ perhaps I shall get it after all. How soon they’ve answered me.’

‘ Ah, that was my character of you—now wasn’t it, Miss Florry ? I knew they’d have you after that.’

It should have been before mentioned that Miss Best, fancying her Christian name was more fashionable when spelt with an *H*, had



so spelt it for some time, but that thinking an additional syllable would make it more fashionable still, and be suggestive of one of our princesses, had adopted the name of Helena instead of Ellen.



CHAPTER XII.

TWO PRETTY WOMEN.

FLORENCE started the next morning for Upper Ten Street. The ‘third-floor,’ with many injunctions from Betty to take care of her, conducted her to an omnibus, and went with her as far as his time would allow. The omnibus was full of men going to their various offices, and as Florence took her place, she was like a bit of sunshine amongst them. Some of them envied the dingly-



clothed little man who had the care of her, and when he got out and asked the conductor to look after her, and set her down at the right place, they wished they could have stayed to see her to her journey's end. But most of them had to leave the omnibus before her.

When she arrived at Upper Ten Street she knocked timidly with the big knocker, and was admitted by a footman, who took her to the morning-room, where Miss Helena Best was busily working at the latest style of antimacassar.

'Good-morning, ma'am,' she said as she curtsied at the door.

Miss Best bowed graciously, and asked her to sit down.

'I understand,' said that lady, 'from your letter, that you can teach English and Latin.'

‘Yes,’ said Florence shyly.

‘You would be required to teach English to a boy and girl, and help the boy to prepare his Latin for the master ; he seems to be already considerably advanced. You think you could do it ?

‘Yes, I think I can. I have read Horace and a good deal of Virgil.’

‘Oh, then you have done pretty well,’ said Miss Best, who understood nothing about it, but was not going to show her ignorance. ‘But you say you have no references ?’

‘Only from my father’s servant,’ said Florence.

‘Have you had no other situation ?’ said Miss Best.

‘Yes,’ said Florence, ‘I was a nursery-governess for nearly two years.’

‘Where ?’

‘At Luton, with Mrs. Tubbs.’

‘Can’t you get a testimonial from her?’

‘I do not care to ask her.’

‘I fear you did not please her, and she had some objection to you. Do you know what it was?’

‘I objected to something she said to me, and left her hurriedly,’ said Florence.

‘I fear you are not humble enough,’ said Miss Best, who enjoyed holding a beautiful woman in terror. ‘You may perhaps object to what *I* may say to you, though I do not think you will have reason to, as I always treat my dependents as if they were equal to myself.’

‘I am ready to bear anything that is just,’ said Florence.

‘But have you never been in another situation, Miss Lisle?’ said Miss Best, who

had heard all about the bookseller's shop and the blue spectacles.

'Yes,' said Florence, 'I was for a few weeks at a bookseller's shop.'

'A shop?' cried Miss Best, throwing up her hands. 'Dear me, Miss Lisle, I am afraid that is very much against you. You can hardly expect to be taken into a house of this sort after serving in a shop.'

'It is difficult,' said Florence, feeling rather choky, and unable to get her words out, 'for any one with merely an education in English, Latin, and Greek to find employment. I was very glad to accept the place, and sorry to leave it.'

'Dear me, I really think this will be an insuperable objection,' said Miss Best, who wanted to make Florence feel at a disadvantage.

'Very well, ma'am,' said Florence, rising to go; but Miss Best begged her to sit

down again. She did not mean her to go by any means.

‘I will go and consult my cousin,’ she said, ‘whether, under such circumstances, she could possibly allow you to enter the family.’

Presently she returned, and begged Florence to follow her to Mrs. Courtenay’s boudoir.

Adela was lying on a couch near the fire, exquisitely dressed in a loose gown that was a mixture of crimson silk and white lace, showing a quantity of white lace and frills under. The room and the lady made a picture such as Florence had never seen before.

‘Yes, she *is* beautiful,’ thought Adela, as Florence, in her plain dress—so out of keeping with everything around her—walked in.

‘Come here, child,’ she said, point-

ing to the end of the couch, ‘and sit down.’

Florence obeyed.

Adela looked at her a moment, while the blood mounted to her cheeks, for she felt that Adela was looking searchingly, and she could not understand this familiar treatment of her.

‘Take your cloak off,’ said Adela, seeing her look so red. ‘I dare say this room seems warm to you; I cannot bear cold. Take your cloak off,’ she repeated.

Florence did so.

‘What a graceful creature,’ thought Adela, as she walked to put her cloak on a chair. ‘Any princess might be proud to have such a bearing.’

Then she said to Miss Best:

‘Just ask them to bring my breakfast up, and to place a cover for Miss Lisle.’



Then she went to an adjoining room, and shut the door after her.

Florence was left alone, wondering why so fine a lady should be so kind to her. Could she know, thought Florence, that she had served in a shop ? and when she did know, would she not send her from her presence immediately ? Or if she knew already, what a kind lady she must be, and how different from the other one. Then she ventured to look round the room, and saw lovely flowers on the table and beautiful pictures on the wall, and wondered why some people were so much richer than others, and why she should be so poor, and what she would do if she were rich. And she thought of the beautiful Adela as having been always brought up in such a home as this, and supposed she did not appreciate it, as she did not know what poverty was. But her wonderings ceased when she heard chil-

dren's voices outside the door. Charlie and Clara considered they were as much interested in their new governess as any one, and knowing she was to arrive that morning at eleven, had been on the look-out.

Miss Best found them on the stairs when she went to order breakfast, and commanded them to go to the schoolroom immediately. They made a pretence of going, but turned back when she was out of the way, and were trying to get a sight of Florence through the crack of the open door. When they saw she was alone, they ventured just to look in. Florence did not see this, but heard Charlie remark to his sister :

‘ Oh, ain’t she jolly ? She’s just the one for us. I decide on her, and if they don’t, I shall just give them a bit of my mind.’

‘ Charlie, do take care,’ said Clara, ‘ we

shall get into such trouble if you don't mind.'

'Well, I'm not going to stand Miss Best,' said Charlie, 'and so I shall tell father.'

But Miss Best happened to be coming upstairs again, and heard this last speech, and Charlie and Clara were marched off to the schoolroom.

Adela had gone into her bedroom and thrown herself in a chair in a perplexed mood.

'Shall I let him have her?' she said to herself. 'It all lies in my hands now; what shall I do?' She sat still for some moments, turning over in her mind again the question she had so often asked herself, whether it was still possible to conquer Lord Brodspeare. Her face was pale with excitement. 'If I play my game very carefully, I might manage it,' she said to herself. Then her

face changed again, and the better thoughts prevailed for a minute. ‘Why should I spoil his happiness,’ she thought, ‘and add nothing to my own? She is a beautiful girl, but I am beautiful also,’ and she walked to the glass. ‘Yes, I *am* beautiful. What is she to me? She is a mere rough diamond. She will make a very good curate’s wife; but I am better fitted for Blethin. If he marries her he will soon tire of her, and find her ill suited for the position. It will be a charity to prevent it. He will thank me for it in time to come, when he has got over his madness. No, I will keep to my resolve. He shall never marry her, never. But I must work carefully, and if Helen does not make a fool of herself, we shall succeed.’

She went into the next room, where she found the breakfast prepared, and Florence sitting alone. Dainty food, served on dainty

china, was placed on a low table by the couch.

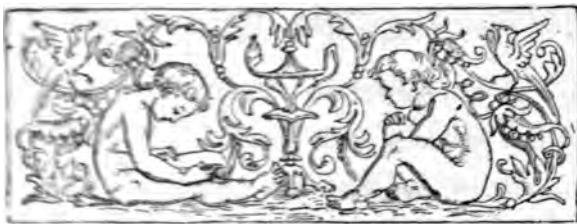
'Now, child,' said Adela, 'take some breakfast, and then I'll hear what you have to say.'

Florence was already very much drawn towards this beautiful lady, and was quite ready to answer any questions she might put to her.

There sat these two women, both so beautiful, and yet both so unlike, Adela leaning back gracefully on the couch, a mass of silk and lace without, of passion and deceit within, toying daintily with her food, and plotting against her companion, while Florence sat in her plain dress, all purity and goodness and love, ready to trust the woman who was deceiving her, and expressing gratitude for the kindness she received.

It was a veritable example of the old

story of the spider and the fly. It was the prettiest parlour into which a poor little fly was ever enticed, and the spider had already wound the very softest silken meshes round its victim.



CHAPTER XIII.

VIRTUOUS INDIGNATION.

 **N** the Monday on which Florence had seen the advertisement which seemed to her to be turning out so fortunate for herself, Miss Best had, out of curiosity, sent for a copy of the *Times* to see how their paragraph looked in print.

Adela never cared to see the *Times*, it was only the paper of business people, she said, and of course Miss Best echoed her cousin's

opinion. If the *Times* was ever mentioned to her she would say languidly :

‘I never see the *Times*; the *Post* is our paper.’

However, when a copy of the *Times* did make its appearance, Miss Best always read the Births, Marriages, and Deaths, and the ‘agony column.’

Now Miss Best had never heard of Florence Lisle, and as Adela would not condescend to touch the *Times*, because she said it smelt of printer’s ink, the advertisement for Florence would have escaped notice but for an incident.

Miss Best read out three sensational advertisements at the top of the column, the usual sort of thing about breaking hearts and lost hopes, and anxious fears. She dearly loved a bit of romance, and it would have been the height of her ambition to have carried on a correspondence with a

lover through the medium of an ‘agony column.’

She looked through the paragraph concerning Florence and did not consider it worth reading, but when she saw the names of Messrs. Sharp and Short, she exclaimed :

‘Oh, these are the lawyers you employed to do the business for me.’

When Adela was worried into making a settlement on her cousin, not wishing her husband’s family lawyers to know anything about her poor relations, she asked Lord Brodspeare to recommend a lawyer to do an odd bit of business for her, and Lord Brodspeare recommended the very men he had been accustomed to employ in the same way.

‘What is it about them?’ said Adela languidly.

Miss Best commenced reading the paragraph.

‘Let me see,’ said Adela, taking the paper rather rudely from her hands before she had half finished the sentence, and forgetting the contamination of the printer’s ink.

‘Then he hasn’t found her,’ said Adela half to herself.

‘Why, what is it?’ said Miss Best eagerly, scenting out a bit of romance.

‘Oh! nothing,’ said Adela, who, knowing what a gossip her cousin was, intended to let her suppose that she had ‘thrown over’ Lord Brodspeare.

But when the letter from Florence arrived on Tuesday morning, Adela pondered over the matter, and saw that she would require her cousin’s help to play her game. So she sent for her. It pleased her to be particularly gracious to her this morning, that she might win her over to help.

‘Helen dear,’ she said, pointing to the

couch, ‘come and sit down, I want to tell you something; and I think I may want your help in a very romantic matter.’

This was delightful to Miss Best.

‘My darling Adela, you know you may command me at any time.’

‘Now listen,’ said Adela impatiently, for she did not like these gushing speeches. ‘You know I told you there was a coolness between me and Blethin Brodspeare?’

‘Yes,’ said Miss Best, feeling what a grand thing it was to be on such terms with a lord as to be able to call him by his Christian name.

‘And you remember that advertisement in the *Times* yesterday? By the way, go on getting the *Times* every day till I tell you to stop. Well, Lord Brodspeare has become entangled with that girl Florence Lisle, and he evidently thinks it his duty to pension her off, and he doesn’t know where

she is. If she finds him out, she may get over him again, for these girls will use any arts to entrap a man.'

Miss Best lifted up her eyes piously and sorrowfully, and said :

'Oh ! poor Lord Brodspeare.'

'Now I have been thinking it over,' continued Adela, 'and the best plan would be to answer her letter and not trouble about any of the others. Tell her to come here to-morrow ; the sooner the better. We must lose no time, for if these advertisements go on she will perhaps chance to see one. She evidently has not seen yesterday's, or she would have answered that in preference to ours.'

'But you never mean to take a creature of that character into the house, do you, Adela ? She will contaminate those dear children.'

Miss Best always professed great affection

for Charlie and Clara, which ‘those dear children’ did not by any means reciprocate.

‘It can’t be helped, Helen. I must save Blethin at any price. I said I would never forgive him this low intrigue, but if I don’t forgive him I will try to save him from further evil.’

‘You always were such a good, generous darling, Adela, but you must forgive that dear, naughty man. I am sure it was all the girl’s fault. I shall feel inclined to tear her to pieces,’ said the virtuous Miss Best.

‘Now you mustn’t go and spoil everything, Helen; you can watch her and see that she behaves herself here, at any rate——’

‘I’ll take care of that,’ said Miss Best grimly.

‘And you must be very kind to her, and make her think you love her, and get her to talk confidentially.’



'Oh, Adela! How horrid! But I'll do it, dear; I'll do more than that to save that dear man.'

'If what I have in my mind succeeds,' said Adela, 'we shall not have to keep her here long, but you will have to be very cautious.'

She then related to Miss Best the episode of the Drax brothers finding Florence in the bookseller's shop, and impressed on her that neither of the brothers must be allowed to see her. 'The only difficulty,' continued Adela, 'will be about the name. We may have some trouble in persuading her to change it, but we must impress on her that it is absolutely necessary, as she has served in a shop. We must make the place very tempting, and offer a large salary, and make her feel the hopelessness of getting any decent employment because she has no character and has served in a shop. You must do that; then I am supposed to take

pity on her, and have her out of charity ; only I insist on the name which she bore in the shop being dropped.'

'I should not wonder if it's a false name after all,' said Miss Best in a tone of virtuous indignation ; 'these creatures often assume names, and this is really a very pretty one, and sounds false.'

'Well, it must be changed, or we can do nothing, for the children are sure to write and talk about her.'

So the note we have seen was written to Florence at once, and when, later in the day, Tom Drax called to see Adela, he was informed that she would probably not leave England so soon as she had anticipated, for she was suffering from a cold which would keep her indoors for some time, and she begged that the brothers would go without her, and she would follow so soon as she was well enough.

Tom was not pleased at this, but Adela insisted on it, and her word had become law with him. Moreover, Jack was getting very disagreeable at having, as he expressed it, to 'hang about London in this beastly weather, with Blethin out of the way.' So Tom and Jack, much to Adela's relief, were persuaded to fix a day for their departure to Paris, where they would remain till Adela joined them, and from thence proceed altogether to Lisbon.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

‘**S**O you can teach Latin?’ said Adela in her prettiest manner to Florence. ‘What a clever girl you must be. Why, I do not know Latin.’

The spider was winding the silken cobweb most delicately round the fly.

‘Yes,’ said Florence modestly. ‘Papa taught me. But I do not know French or music or other things that would be more useful to me as a governess.’

‘But you happen to know exactly what we want. Did you never go to school?’

‘No, papa taught me everything.’

‘And have you no brothers or sisters or relations?’

‘No,’ said Florence, ‘I do not know of any relations. I dare say I may have some, but I do not know of them.’

‘And you have no one in the world to take care of you but your father’s servant?’

‘No one,’ said Florence; ‘but she is so good and kind.’

‘Poor child,’ said Adela in the sweetest tone. ‘Now tell me your history; everything about yourself; I am very much interested in you, and even if you do not suit me, I should like to help you in some way, to find some home for you.’

Florence told all she could remember of her father and her home. When she spoke of her father's death her voice trembled.

'Don't trouble yourself about that, my dear,' said Adela, 'pass it over. I know what you feel, and can sympathise. Where did you go then ?'

Florence related the history of her life with the Tubbses. When she came to the incident of leaving them, she was somewhat confused. Adela had gained such an influence over her that she felt inclined to tell her everything ; and yet she dreaded lest the name of Lord Brodspeare should be mentioned. She still believed in him in her heart, though she tried to persuade herself that the world was right about him ; and she could not bear to have him censured in any way.

But this was exactly the part of her story which Adela meant to hear, and Florence was no match for Adela.

'Why did you leave these people?' she said.

'Mrs. Tubbs was very rude to me, and I could not bear it.'

'But how? tell me, child.'

'She accused me of being unsteady in conduct.'

'Had you done anything to cause it?'

'Nothing,' said Florence. 'At least,' she continued, remembering that in the judgment of the world she had probably done very wrong, 'I did not know that I had — I —' she stammered and blushed, for Adela looked at her so searchingly.

'My poor child,' said Adela in such a

pitying tone that she made Florence feel she was an injured creature.

She went nearer to her, took her hand softly, laid it in hers, and stroked it.

‘Don’t cry, dear.’

Florence was not crying, but so much pity made her very much inclined to.

‘Tell me everything. I am only a woman like yourself, and I know what temptations a woman has, especially a pretty woman. Tell me everything, it will relieve your mind; you have no sister, try to think of me as a friend who is willing to help you, and tell me all, then I shall know how to help. I cannot bear to think that while I have so much comfort round me, a young creature like you should be without friends and have to work as you have done. Consider me as your friend. What had

you done to make that horrid vulgar woman rude to you ? I am sure she was a vulgar wretch.'

'I really did not know that I had done wrong. I only talked to a gentleman who talked to me at a fête that was given at Blethin, and I went with Mrs. Tubbs.'

'Ah ! I quite understand, my dear ; and then people said bad things of you, and gossiped about you. It's the same everywhere. I have not escaped slander. I have just broken off an engagement with Lord Brodspeare because—— How you start, child ! What is it ?'

'Nothing,' murmured Florence. The colour had died out of her face and lips.

'What is it ? What can be the matter ?' said Adela, starting up. ' You are ill—faint—what can I do ? Shall I send for water ?'



'No, thank you,' said Florence, making an effort to appear all right; 'the room is warm.'

'I will open the window a minute,' said Adela.

She did so, and then went into the next room and brought out a little glass of some liquid which she made Florence drink.

When they again sat down she said very kindly :

'I don't want to distress you, but I feel sure that there was some reason for your emotion just now. Tell me what it was.'

Florence was silent.

'Speak the truth, child; it is always best to do so.'

Poor Florence had never been so distressed in her life as at this moment. Her first thought was, 'Then he is false after all.'



Her next was to blame herself for ever thinking about him, as she ought to have known the ways of the world better, and that a man like Lord Brodspeare was not likely to mean anything more than amusing himself with so insignificant a creature. As if he would ever think of her when he had this beautiful high-born lady to love ! Then she felt that it might hurt the lady if she knew that Lord Brodspeare had paid her any attention. ‘Though she could never be jealous of *me*,’ thought Florence. Then she could not bear the idea of saying anything that would help to fling another stone at Lord Brodspeare, though he had turned out so different from what she expected. She was perplexed. She was afraid that Adela had already guessed the cause of her excitement.

‘I think I can guess why you are silent,’ said Adela. ‘You may perhaps fear to

offend me—me—your best friend. Is it so?

This was an awkward way of putting it, but Florence could not cope with Adela, and she falteringly said :

‘Yes.’

‘You need not fear,’ said Adela ; ‘Lord Brodspeare has a reputation for intrigues with women, and as I was about to tell you, I have broken the engagement in consequence. It was with him you were seen talking then ?’

‘Yes,’ said Florence ; ‘but he said nothing but what everybody might know. I can assure you he didn’t.’

She looked appealingly at Adela, who had during the last few minutes put on an expression of injury done to her, as if Florence had drawn away Lord Brodspeare from her.

‘I forgive you, child, if he did,’ said



Adela ; ‘he is so thoughtless, he does not mean half he says.’

‘Oh, but I assure you he said nothing particular to me ; I only saw him a short time on two occasions, and then I went away, and would not let him know where I had gone.’

‘And very wise of you too, for I fear it is enough to ruin any woman to have her name coupled with his. You are a good discreet girl. Now tell me all about it, how you saw him.’

Florence related very simply all that had happened at Bleethin.

‘And have you never seen him since ?’
said Adela.

‘Never,’ she replied.

‘Nor heard of him ?’

‘Yes, he once called at Mr. Kershaw’s, and asked for me, but I was out ; and when I heard of it I left Mr. Kershaw.’

‘Was that the shop where my cousin tells me you were unfortunate enough to be placed?’

‘Yes; a bookseller’s shop.’

‘Dear me,’ said Adela, playing with a pretty little screen she held to shade her face from the fire, ‘It’s very sad. However, you have been a very prudent girl, and even if you are compromised in the eyes of the world—for the world is severe, you know—you have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done right. It was perhaps a little foolish to allow Lord Brodspeare to be so familiar with you, but it was excusable in one so young. It was hardly the best thing you could do for yourself to go into a shop, for no one cares to have a governess who has served in a shop, but no doubt you found it difficult to get into a family without a character. I really admire your conduct very much, and shall engage you as

governess at once. I do not think you will suit me permanently, but if I keep you a few months, it will be a reference for you elsewhere, and in the meantime I will find a situation for you.'

'Oh, thank you,' said Florence. 'I do not know how to thank you enough.'

'How came Lord Brodspeare to know you were in the shop?'

'I think some friends of his saw me, for they came in to buy books.'

'That raises a difficulty about your coming here, for friends of Lord Brodspeare's often visit me, and they might recognise you. This would be unpleasant in two ways, for it would probably lead to his lordship knowing of your whereabouts ; and my friends would be very much astonished that I should receive a young woman from a shop into my house to instruct children.'

Florence looked downcast.

‘However,’ said Adela, ‘I see a way out of the difficulty, and it is the only way. You must for the present change your name, and not see any company here, except such as my cousin and I choose for you.’

‘*Must I change my name?*’ said Florence.

‘My dear child, I see no other course. Only think of your present position. I fear you have never seen it seriously enough. You are ruined in the eyes of every one who knows of the affair with Lord Brodspeare. You ought to be thankful of this chance of retrieving your reputation.’

‘But I am sure I did nothing wrong,’ said Florence.

‘No, my dear, but in the eyes of the world it is the same as if you did. You don’t understand these things.’

Florence looked very much distressed; she began to feel as if she were very

wicked, and had committed all sorts of crimes.

‘But there now,’ said Adela, patting her on the shoulder; ‘don’t fret about it. You are a lucky girl to have some one to believe in you and help you out of temptation. Be guided by me, and you are sure to go right. What is your servant’s name?’

‘Betty Fawdon.’

‘Then don’t you think you had better call yourself Miss Fawdon for the present? You can explain the reason to your servant.’

‘Very well,’ said Florence.

‘Do you read the newspapers?’ asked Adela.

‘I have lately been reading some that Betty’s lodger brings home every week.’

‘Not the daily papers?’

‘No—he does not bring those.’

‘It is just as well that you do not,’ said Adela; ‘for when gentlemen have designs

upon young women they sometimes inquire for them in newspapers. If you should happen ever to see anything that seems addressed to you, you will understand what it means, and not answer it.'

'Of course,' said Florence.

Florence stayed to lunch, which she took with Adela alone, but was scarcely able to eat.

It was arranged that she should take up her position as governess to the children on the Friday of that week.

The Drax brothers had fixed the following Monday for their departure from London ; so Adela thought she could easily keep Florence out of their way for those few days, and she longed to get her safely under her roof.

When Florence left the house that afternoon she felt a very different creature from what she was when she entered it.

She had gone timidly up to the door in the morning, full of hope, and yet fearing failure, unconscious of guilt, and trusting in God and her fellow-creatures ; believing implicitly in her hero, Lord Brodspeare, notwithstanding all that was said of him ; ready, if she should ever again meet him, to tell him all she had gone through, and beg his protection.

She was a lonely little woman, without a friend but Betty Fawdon and the 'third-floor,' and—yes—her hero ; he was yet her friend in spirit ; but she was to a certain extent happy—happy in doing right, and in her perfect trust in God.

But when she left the house, she had wholly changed. A bright prospect was in front of her. God had sent her a friend. Had he sent her ? she stopped to argue with herself. If so, why was she so miserable ?

She was utterly cast down. She felt her-



self to be a guilty creature, with all the world pointing its finger at her. And the hero she had set up was only a bad man who trifled with the hearts of women—tossed them about as he would a ball. Why did God show such favour to him if he was so bad? she thought. Why was he allowed the power of writing such beautiful poetry? Was it true, after all, as some clergymen teach, that people are allowed to have pleasure in this world, and are made to suffer in the next? And why did he look so good and honest, if he was really bad? What a funny world it must be, that the bad people were so pleasant.

While these thoughts were running in her mind, Florence was walking to get the omnibus back to Islington. She held her head down, for she fancied everybody must know how she had lost her reputation.

She was not learned about omnibuses, but

the ‘third-floor’ had made her take particular notice of the outside of the one she occupied in the morning, that she might know it in going home, and he told her to go to the corner of a certain street to get it.

Now, in the midst of her meditations she found herself in this street, and waited for the omnibus ; but through all the excitement of the day she had forgotten her bearings, and did not find out till the omnibus came to the end of its journey that she had been going away from instead of towards Islington.

She had kept her eyes down during the whole time, from a sense of shame, and this mistake roused her from her thoughts. She blamed herself for her foolishness, and thought it would never do for any one who had to make a living to be so thoughtless. She was obliged to remain in the same omnibus, and go all the way back to Islington—a very long drive.

It was already getting dark, and by the time she reached River Terrace, Betty and the 'third-floor,' who had been back some time, were greatly alarmed.



CHAPTER XV.

A FRESH START.

FONCE more little Florence started with all her possessions from River Terrace, old Betty looking after her mournfully, for there was no prospect of any more happy Sundays. It was understood that 'Miss Fawdon' should have plenty of leisure, but she could not be spared from the house, and no regular settlement of holidays had been made. Still Betty felt that her young mistress was well provided for, for she was to have a salary of a hundred

a year and live in a beautiful house. She could not see why a change of name was necessary, for she thought any fine lady might be proud of Miss Florry, whether she had served in a shop or not, and Florence had given no other reason for the change, but she was proud that Miss Florry would condescend to make use of her name. The ‘third-floor’ was very down-hearted at the idea of not seeing his ‘sweet angel’ for so long, but he was glad at her good fortune.

When Florence arrived in Upper Ten Street she was shown to a prettily-furnished bedroom, a much more luxurious room than she had ever occupied in her life.

Miss Best had indeed remonstrated with Adela on the unnecessary trouble that was taken for a governess, and one who had never been accustomed to such things, but

Adela was determined that everything should be done to make the prisoner comfortable. For, after all, Florence was in reality a prisoner, in a very comfortable prison, with a beautiful woman for her gaoler. Though Miss Best might be more properly called her gaoler, and Adela the governor of the gaol.

Florence looked round the room and thought how grateful she ought to be to her beautiful mistress for making her so comfortable, but somehow she did not feel grateful. She was angry with herself for her ingratitude, and began to think she had a bad rebellious spirit which she must conquer.

She prayed very earnestly that night that she might do her duty, and be thankful for such a home; that she might love those around her and forget Lord Brodspeare.

Yes, she was obliged to pray that she might forget him, for he would not go out of her thoughts.

She felt that she ought to pity the beautiful lady, who had perhaps given her heart to Lord Brodspeare, who had trifled with it as with others; but somehow she could not pity her. She found herself always admiring the man, who was undoubtedly very bad; for did not everybody say so. She thought how angry her dear father would be with her for such wicked thoughts. She felt almost inclined to inflict some physical pain on herself for a punishment.

The next day she was happier, for she could not help loving her two pupils; and when once a feeling of love or sympathy is roused, happiness must come with it.

Charlie and Clara were delighted with her.
‘Those dear children,’ as Miss Best called

them, had been anything but good since they arrived in town, at least according to that lady's judgment, for they seemed to take pleasure in giving her trouble. They had never known restraint before, except old Keziah's, and she always supplemented her scolding with something nice to eat after.

Miss Best's discipline was severe, and Charlie had shown a disposition to kick against it, both on his own part and for Clara. Moreover, town life was not at all in accordance with Charlie's ideas. He had no notion of a park being a place where he was to walk stiffly up and down, and when he first went into Hyde Park, he commenced at once to climb a tree, while Miss Best, who was some way off, rushed towards him frantically waving her umbrella to call him down. And he very soon did come down, not because Miss Best ordered him, but



because he found his hands and clothes covered with a black substance.

'What nasty dirty trees you grow here,' said Charlie to Miss Best, quite unconcerned at her gesticulations.

Now when Florence came, they were both in love with her—absolutely in love; but Charlie declined to show a proper reverence for her. He said he thought her 'such a jolly girl,' and didn't he wish they were down at Draxfell, for he knew she'd like to get up into his big trees; and he'd take her some day, and tell her all about his oak and chestnut and cedar.

But Florence was not allowed to enjoy her love for the children without a drawback.

On the Saturday evening Adela sent for her, having heard from Miss Best of some of Charlie's remarks concerning his governess.

'My dear girl,' said Adela, 'I fear you

have a hard task to tame those little bears ?

' Not at all,' said Florence.

' Yes, I know you have, for I have heard of their rudeness to you. You must not mind it ; they will soon be better, especially if you hold a firm hand over them. But I must beg you to do this, and not allow them to be too familiar. Check them whenever they are, and punish them when necessary.'

Florence was again sad. She began to think that all bad people had a fascination for her, for she loved the children, and thought them better than any she had ever known. This was another sin on her mind, another battle to fight, another thing to pray for.

So on Sunday morning she joined Miss Best and the children at breakfast in a subdued frame of mind, intending to try and be

severe with the children, and not allow them to be familiar.

Now Charlie was not by any means in a subdued state. He had a keen remembrance of the horrors of last Sunday, when he and Clara were taken off to the most fashionable of ritualistic churches, and he was placed with the men on one side, and Clara and Miss Best with the women on the other; so that he had not even the satisfaction of whispering to Clara during service—a wicked practice of his when old Keziah used to take them to church.

In the afternoon they had to learn their catechism, which the little ‘ignoramuses didn’t know a word of,’ as Miss Best said; and in the evening they went into dessert to meet their father and uncle, who were dining there.

Charlie, supposing that he was to have such another Sunday, thought he’d have a

little extra fun early in the morning. So he came down in the highest spirits.

‘Hallo! Miss Fawdon,’ he said, ‘do you feel ill? There’s something the matter with you.’

‘No,’ said Florence, ‘thank you, I’m quite well.’

‘Do be quiet, Charlie,’ said Miss Best, ‘you are so boisterous; and children ought to be quiet on Sundays.’

‘Well, that is good!’ said Charlie. ‘I never knew that before. I don’t see why we shouldn’t talk as loudly on Sundays as other days. When I go back to Draxfell, I shall tell old Rover that he mustn’t bark so loudly on Sundays. Wouldn’t the old boy be astonished?’

‘Charlie, you’re a rude boy, you mustn’t say such things to me,’ said Miss Best severely.

‘Now am I rude, Miss Fawdon? I appeal to you.’

Charlie had an idea that now the governess had come he need not mind Miss Best.

‘Do you always talk in a whisper on Sundays, Miss Fawdon?’ continued Charlie. ‘I’m sure you don’t, you’re much too jolly. You’re so jolly, you know, and like one of us, that it seems ridiculous to call you Miss Fawdon. What’s your other name?’

‘Charlie! how dare you?’ said Miss Best. ‘Go out of the room this moment—up to the schoolroom. I shall report you to Mrs. Courtenay.’

‘Shall I take up my breakfast, or ring for James to do it?’ said Charlie, quite quietly.

Miss Best was losing her temper and dignity.

‘Go at once, I tell you,’ she said; ‘and Miss Fawdon, you must double his task in the catechism to-day for his impertinence.’

‘Oh!’ said Charlie, turning back at the

door, ‘if the catechism is a punishment, I need only learn it when I am naughty.’

Miss Best could stand it no longer, or rather, could not sit still. She jumped from her chair in the most undignified way, and made a dash at Charlie.

Charlie regarded it as a pleasant excitement, and instead of running up to the schoolroom, went into the library, where she chased him, and then upstairs into the drawing-room, where was a fine field for him, as the room ‘went round a corner ;’ then he ran upstairs and in his excitement banged against the door of Adela’s boudoir ; then up again into the schoolroom, and planted his back against the door to prevent Miss Best from coming in.

‘ You bad, wicked child !’ said Miss Best, pushing at the door ; ‘ let me come in.’

‘ Take care,’ said Charlie, ‘ you might break the door if you pushed too hard.’

Meanwhile, Adela had been ringing her

bell violently, and a couple of servants had appeared. Miss Best heard them on the landing below, and went to explain what was the matter.

‘Oh, Adela!’ she said, throwing herself down on a chair, out of breath, and putting both her hands to her heart; ‘that boy is more than I can bear. Please lend me your smelling-bottle.’

‘What is the matter?’ said Adela. ‘I thought the house was coming down. I do hate a noise in the morning—it upsets my nerves.’

‘Nerves!’ shrieked Miss Best, ‘we shall have no nerves left soon, with that dreadful boy. I cannot think what we are to do with him.’

‘What has he done now?’ said Adela.

‘He has been behaving in the most shocking way at breakfast to me and Miss Fawdon; he positively proposed calling her by her

Christian name, and asked what it was.'

'The rude little brute!' said Adela. 'When we get his father and uncle out of the way we'll manage him better. He shall not see them when they come to-day, as he has behaved so badly. There is no fear of their coming till the afternoon, so you can take Miss Fawdon to church, and after lunch be sure you keep her up in the schoolroom till they've gone. Don't let it be possible for them to meet her on the stairs anywhere. Then, after to-day we shall be safe, if Lord Brodspeare only keeps out of the way, and I think he will.'

Adela had not told Miss Best of her engagement to Tom, but Miss Best had noticed Tom's attentions. She had also endeavoured to fascinate Jack herself, and talked a great deal to him about that 'dear interesting boy of his,' and she did not mention

how rude the ‘dear interesting boy’ was to her.

Now she would have been very delighted to have married Jack; but she wanted her cousin to ‘marry a title,’ for it would be so delightful to talk of her as ‘my cousin Lady So-and-so.’ Therefore she was not very enthusiastic about Tom’s frequent visits.

‘Mr. Drax is a nice gentleman, dear Adela,’ she said; ‘but he is not good enough for my beautiful cousin.’

‘What rubbish you talk, Helen; he doesn’t mean anything particular in coming here, except to see his daughter.’

‘Ah!’ said Miss Best slyly ‘it isn’t his daughter he seems to care for when he comes. But there, he’s only like all the rest of the men, mad after my darling Adela.’

Miss Best was forgetting her late skirmish with Charlie in her pet subject of romance. There was nothing she liked better than

talking of love and lovers, and there was nothing Adela hated worse than having to listen to her nonsense.

Miss Best's troubles with Charlie were not over yet that morning, for when they all assembled to start for church, Charlie said to Florence :

'So you are coming to see the show ! It's such a grand affair, the clergyman keeps changing his clothes, and wears such fine things. There was no show in Draxfell church ; was there where you used to go ?'

Miss Best did not notice the first part of this speech, for she was in distress at breaking a button from her glove.

'You blasphemous child !' she broke out fiercely.

Charlie did not know the meaning of this exactly, but thought it sounded like swearing. He looked up to see whether she was ready for another chase, for he did not at all object

himself. But her face subsided into an expression of utter disgust.

'Go on,' she said to him. 'Walk with Miss Fawdon. You are not good enough to walk with me. I shall take your sister Clara.'

Which much delighted Charlie, for he had a 'good talk' with Florence, and told her he liked her so much, next to Clara, and that he hated that old woman, pointing his thumb over his shoulder towards Miss Best; and didn't Florence hate her?

Poor Florence felt that she ought to scold the boy and lecture him on his behaviour to Miss Best, and tell him to be more respectful to herself, but somehow she couldn't do it. He seemed so good and natural and gentle to her. It was only Miss Best who could rouse any bad passions in him.

And, after all, she was only a mere girl. She had been trying for the past three years



to act like a wise little old woman. Wisdom and prudence and every other virtue is generally expected from a governess, whatever age she may be.

Little Florence had always been trying to crush the youth out of herself, and to be very sedate. But youth will come to the surface sometimes, and on that Sunday morning when their young blood was warmed with quick movement on a cold bright day, Florence and Charlie both felt in high spirits.

‘Wouldn’t it be jolly to be down at Draxfell now, and have a run in the park, Miss Fawdon?’

‘Yes,’ said Florence; ‘it is such a bright day.’

‘Oh, it’s jolly!’ said Charlie. ‘Let me take your hand, and we’ll have a run along the pavement.’

‘No, no,’ said Florence. ‘Miss Best will

be—no, I mean—you know it isn't considered proper ;' and Florence tried once more to look demure.

And so these two happy naughty children (for Florence was only a child) walked on together, both pondering over the lesson they had to learn ; that to be good they must do as everybody else did, and not obey their own instincts : only Florence had proceeded much further in the lesson than Charlie had.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE PRISONER AND THE RAKE.

SHoulding the afternoon, when Florence was carefully stowed away in the schoolroom, under Miss Best's guardianship, three gentlemen called.

Only Tom and Jack Drax had been expected. But the brothers had taken it into their heads that they could not leave England without seeing Lord Brodspeare ; so they telegraphed to him on Saturday that they meant to go to Paris by Sunday night's mail, and begged him to come to their hotel.

Lord Brodspeare was getting impatient at hearing nothing of Florence, and thought it would be good to divert his thoughts by just running over for a day or two to Paris with the brothers. So he made his appearance at the hotel in the morning, and went with them to call at Adela's. They did not mean to dine there, because they had to catch the evening train; so they arranged to have a hasty dinner at the hotel just before starting.

Adela's manner was peculiar when she met Lord Brodspeare. She knew very well that he did not intend to tell her of his affairs.

He evidently did not care to confide in her. Therefore, her triumph was great in actually having in her hands his misery or happiness.

‘I hardly expected your lordship,’ she said blandly. ‘I thought you were very much engaged at Blethin.’

‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘I was; but, you see, I can’t let these two boys go off without another look at them. I am sorry you are too ill to start with us. You don’t look ill.’

‘You never give me any sympathy, Blethin, however bad I am.’

‘I’ll leave Tom to do that,’ said Lord Brodspeare.

Miss Best, hearing from the servant that Lord Brodspeare had come, was ‘dying to see him.’ She had never spoken to a lord in her life. She knew very well that she would be kept a close prisoner to watch Florence while he was in the house, so she thought her only chance was to go at once to the drawing-room.

She came in, bringing Clara. She took care not to look at Adela, who, she knew, would be frowning at her.

'I have brought your little girl up, Mr. Drax,' she said simpering, and shaking hands with him and Jack.

Adela was looking black, but the delighted Miss Best was not going to see it. She still stood simpering, looking at Lord Brodspeare as if waiting for an introduction.

'What a fool she is!' said Adela to herself. Then aloud: 'Miss Best—Lord Brodspeare.'

Lord Brodspeare bowed, and did not seem inclined to take any further notice, but the gushing young woman was not going to lose the opportunity of shaking hands with a lord. She went up to him and held out her hand, and looked as if she were ready to fall down and worship him.

Presently Adela said:

'Charlie was not a very good boy this morning. He was rude to his governess; so



we told him he should not see you ; but as it's the last day in England, I think we must forgive him. Helen, will you send him down.'

Miss Best, who felt the room almost swim round her in her elation at talking to a 'real lord,' moved to the door. Adela followed her quickly, and said outside :

'Don't you leave that girl for one minute —mind, not a minute. Keep her in that room, and the door locked. Send the boy down by himself.'

When Charlie was sent down he wanted to know if he mightn't take Florence with him to show her to his father and uncle.

When he had shaken hands with them all, Lord Brodspeare said :

'I hear you've been rude to your governess, Charlie. You should never be rude to ladies.'

'I'm sure I didn't know I was,' said

Charlie, ‘for don’t I love her ; so would you if you saw her. Oh ! she is so jolly, Lord Brodspeare, and so pretty ! She’s got such beautiful brown curly hair that feels like silk, and she never grumbled when I pulled it all down when we were playing. Oh, she’s a jolly girl ; I do love her so much.’

‘Hush, Charlie !’ said Adela.

‘The youngster’s quite in love,’ said Lord Brodspeare, laughing ; ‘he’s beginning early. I say, Adela, it won’t do for you to have any one so fascinating as this about. Are we allowed to look at this beautiful creature ?’

‘Of course Lord Brodspeare is interested in a beautiful woman,’ said Adela, ‘but I think I had better not allow him to see her ; it might be dangerous. She’s not particularly pretty ; children have odd taste in such matters. There, now, run along, children ; you may come down again when the gentlemen go, and say good-bye to them.’



So Charlie and Clara returned to the schoolroom.

'I say, Miss Fawdon,' said Charlie, 'Lord Brodspeare's downstairs ; he's such a jolly fellow ; you ought to go and see him.'

Miss Best watched Florence's face. This bit of romance was delightful to her. It never occurred to her that perhaps Florence was suffering when she turned so pale. The romantic situation was so pleasant that she could not connect suffering with it. Although she pretended to be shocked with Florence for losing her character, she would have given anything to be in such a position herself. Losing a character with a lord was such a different thing from losing it in a commonplace way.'

'What a handsome man he is!' said Miss Best, talking in a girlish way. 'I have just been speaking to him. A regular rake, I should think.'

Florence felt as if she hated the woman at that moment. She lost control of herself, and said fiercely :

‘ He is not.’

‘ What’s a rake ?’ said Charlie.

‘ Little boys mustn’t ask questions,’ she said, ‘ and people should keep their tempers,’ glancing towards Florence, ‘ and remember their position.’

‘ Will you tell me, Miss Fawdon, what is a rake ?’

‘ I hardly know,’ said Florence.

‘ Then why did you say Lord Brodspeare is not a rake ?’

‘ Oh ! bother the boy !’ said Miss Best, and Florence was glad she came to the rescue.

But Charlie treasured this up in his mind. He could not make out what it meant, and intended to investigate it further on the first opportunity.

Adela managed to get Lord Brodspeare



into a corner of the drawing-room for a few minutes, and asked him how Miss Lisle was.

‘I hope she is well,’ he said.

‘But do you not know? I thought the wedding was near at hand.’

‘I don’t care to go through a catechism Adela, so be quiet.’

‘What a fool you are, Blethin. I don’t believe you have found her, and perhaps never will. You had better come to your senses. It’s a good sign that you’re going to Paris. I hope you’ll stay till I come out. I shall join you in a few days.’ The last words she said out loud, and Tom joined in.

‘Yes, we don’t mean to let him go in a hurry now.’

When they were going, the children were sent for to say good-bye to their parents. Charlie, instead of returning up to the

schoolroom, amused himself by climbing on the balustrade while the gentlemen took leave of Adela. He slid down to the floor below, so that he was in the hall as they passed through.

‘I say, Lord Brodspeare,’ he said, ‘Miss Best says you’re a rake, and Miss Fawdon says you’re not. What is a rake?’

‘A bad man,’ said Lord Brodspeare, laughing.

‘Then I agree with Miss Fawdon,’ said Charlie. ‘I say, do come up and see her, she is so jolly? She’s in the schoolroom.’

‘Why, Charlie, I’m afraid she’ll alter her opinion if I go and invade the schoolroom unasked. She’ll agree with Miss Best. Good-bye, my boy. I’ll come and see you when I come back.’

‘I seem to be pretty well discussed by the women there,’ said Lord Brodspeare, as he



nt out. ‘I am glad there’s one to take
part, though it is only the little governess
it Charlie has fallen so desperately in love
th.’



CHAPTER XVII.

BETTY'S VISITOR.

 N Monday morning Miss Best ran up to Adela's room with the *Times*.

'Here it is again,' she exclaimed, pointing to Lord Brodspeare's advertisement.

'Yes,' said Adela quietly, 'he seems determined to find her. I wonder whether it goes in any other papers. I'm only afraid that her servant may see it before I can carry out my plans. Now, Helen, you must do something for me to-day. Do you think you can imitate the girl's handwriting ?'

'I think I could do it pretty well.'

'I know I could,' said Adela, 'but I want to send it to Sharp and Short, the lawyers, and they will of course show it to Lord Brodspeare. He knows my hand so well that he might detect a likeness. Perhaps we had better make the girl write some letters for me this morning, then you can study the writing.'

In about an hour's time Florence was busily engaged writing letters to Mrs. Courtenay's dictation, delighted at the idea of being so useful. She wrote a pretty, round, firm hand, much more difficult to copy than the ordinary female scrawl. She could write the Greek character well, a good foundation for a handwriting; and Miss Best, with her thirty years of life, had probably never written a fourth part of what Florence had done in her various studies with her father, though Miss Best's letters

were generally eight or a dozen pages in length. Then Miss Best's early education was somewhat crude, and her handwriting had been picked up in an irregular way ; so that, although it presented a very good appearance as a whole, it had, when analysed, that sameness of character which is so observable in the caligraphy of the uneducated.

So Miss Best had no easy task when she sat down to write the following letter, and had, indeed, to write several copies before she pleased Adela :

“London, Monday.

‘GENTLEMEN,

‘I have just seen an advertisement in the *Times* addressed to me. I know who wants me, but it is no good. I am going to be married to a person of my own class, and

we intend to emigrate, as the money has been supplied by a friend who is anxious to protect me from insult.

‘Yours truly,

‘FLORENCE LISLE.’

This letter was posted on Monday afternoon. On Tuesday morning, a carriage drew up at No. 7, River Terrace, and Mrs. Courtenay’s footman made such use of the knocker as had never been experienced before. The ‘parlours’ and ‘first-floors’ for some way down the Terrace came to their windows, and wondered what was up at No. 7. Betty, who was making some cooking preparations, was so startled that she dropped an egg on the kitchen floor. The small servant was told to open the door, but she was so astonished at the magnificence of the footman that she stood

with her mouth and eyes wide open, and the question as to whether Miss Fawdon was at home had to be repeated. Meanwhile Betty, who was listening from the kitchen, had no means of reaching her bedroom to get tidy without being seen, so she pulled down her sleeves, and took off her apron, and settled her cap as well as she could by the help of a small glass that hung in the kitchen, and then went into the parlour, where she found a very splendidly dressed lady. She dropped a curtsey, and waited for Adela to speak.

‘ You are Miss Fawdon, I think ? ’

‘ Yes, ma’am,’ said Betty.

‘ I have come about my little friend, Miss Lisle.’

‘ Oh, indeed, ma’am ! ’ said Betty. ‘ I’m sure I hope you’ll excuse me,’ looking down at her dress. ‘ I was busy cooking—’



'Don't mention it,' said Adela, in her sweetest tones. 'I am sure you need not be ashamed of your industry. Miss Lisle tells me what a kind friend you have been to her.'

Betty was not ashamed of her working dress, but, in honour of being Miss Florry's friend, she would have preferred making the best appearance possible.

'I consider it an honour to do anything for my dear Miss Florry. I brought her up, for her mother died many years ago, poor dear.'

'I have taken a great interest in her,' said Adela, 'and am anxious to do what I can for her.'

'Oh, thank you, ma'am!' said Betty, with a curtsey.

'Now pray sit down, and see whether we can arrange anything for her benefit. She

will not suit me, you know; she is too young.'

'I am sorry for that, ma'am,' said Betty, looking downcast.

'But I do not intend to lose sight of her. I admire her very much for her determination to work, and I mean to find something suitable for her. I have been thinking how well you might both do if you were to emigrate.'

'What! go to foreign parts, ma'am?'

'Yes; if your passages were paid, and you had a few hundred pounds, you might both do very well, much better than in England.'

'I had much rather not, ma'am,' said Betty, who had a truly British objection to foreign parts. 'I can get along pretty well here, and can always give a home to my dear Miss Florry, though not what she ought to have.'



'But it would be such an advantage to her, and I know you are interested in her. You see,' said Adela in an undertone, 'since the affair with Lord Brodspeare she has rather lost character.'

'Lost her character!' shrieked Betty; 'my Miss Florry lost her character! You must be mistaken, ma'am!'

'Surely you know all about it, Miss Fawdon? Ah! I see I have made a mistake, and betrayed her confidence. The poor child has evidently told no one but myself.'

'Oh! ma'am, what do you mean? I am sure my Miss Florry is the sweetest and modestest young lady there ever was, and never even so much as thought anything wrong. Oh! dear me, what can it mean?'

'Pray calm yourself, my good woman,' said Adela, 'and I will tell you all about it. As you have made yourself her guardian, it is only right you should know; for then you

can help me find some way of doing something for her.'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Betty, who was using her handkerchief to her eyes. 'I'm sure it's a mistake.'

'Did you not know,' said Adela, 'that she lost her situation with those people where she was governess, because there was some scandal about her and a nobleman?'

'Oh! I don't believe it,' said Betty. 'I can't believe it. It was false.'

'I don't say,' continued Adela, fearing Betty would become so bad that she wouldn't listen to anything, 'that she actually did wrong, but she gave occasion for gossips to talk.'

'Poor dear!' said Betty, 'they'll talk at nothing.'

'And did you not know that the same gentleman pursued her when she served in



the shop ; and, like a prudent girl, she left in consequence ?

‘ Yes ; I knew she left about some gentleman, but I’m sure she never did anything wrong ; no, never ; it isn’t in Miss Florry to do it. Oh ! the wicked people !’ and Betty burst into tears.

‘ Now, do calm yourself and listen to me. The child told me all this herself, and I am so pleased with her conduct altogether, that I mean to help her. I know the gentleman who is looking after her, and I know he has a very bad name. You must help me to keep her out of his way. The very fact of her refusing to see him makes him long all the more for her ; and if he could only once find out where she is, he would not mind employing force to get her away.’

‘ He should never get her from me,’ said Betty, standing up and holding out her two big fists in defensive attitude. ‘ I’d tear his



eyes out if he touched my Miss Florry, the bad wretch. Only let me know who he is, and I'll give him up to the police—lord or no lord. What did you say his name is, ma'am ?

‘Never mind his name,’ said Adela, who was delighted at having brought Betty to that mood. ‘What we must do, is to consider what had best be done for the poor girl, to get her out of his way. She is safe at present, for I am taking care of her, and do not allow her to go out without my cousin. But he is still looking after her.’

‘Then I should like to catch him,’ said Betty, starting up again.

‘He has advertised for her in a paper,’ said Adela.

‘Has he ? the villain !’ said Betty.

‘Yes,’ said Adela ; ‘and I have warned her to be on her guard never to answer his

advertisements ; and, if you should see them, don't take any notice of them.'

'That I won't,' said Betty.

'Now, although she is not much use to me as a governess, I intend to keep her till I can find something suitable, because it will give her a character to have lived in my family ; and she can always refer to me at any time.'

'Oh, thank you, ma'am.'

Adela thought perhaps she had said enough for that time ; so, after paying Betty some compliments on the cleanliness of her house, and saying she should again do herself the pleasure of driving over, and would probably bring Florence with her, she left, and was accompanied to the door by Betty, where the footman stood on guard, with a group of small children admiring him.

Betty was delighted with the beautiful lady, and was thankful Miss Florry had

such a kind protector. ‘But, poor little dear,’ thought Betty, ‘why didn’t she tell me herself about that bad man? No wonder she took to the spectacles. How much she must have suffered.’

The small servant had listened to the whole of the proceedings through the key-hole, and told the small servants each way next door, who were dying with curiosity to know who the fine lady was, that it was something to do with Miss Florry, who had got into disgrace, and her missis had cried about it, and she was going to be sent out of the way.

The respective mistresses of these servants heard the story from them, each in a somewhat different form, and both greatly exaggerated; so that after comparing notes they decided that Florence was ‘no better than she should be,’ which they declared they had all along thought with that pretty face

of hers, and they wondered how No. 7, who seemed a respectable woman, could encourage a hussy of that sort ; and that they weren't going to stand her coming there again, or the Terrace would lose its character and they should get no respectable lodgers ; and No. 6 would pretty soon represent it to the landlord if she did come ; and No. 8 was not going to allow her daughter to be contaminated by a hussy of that sort.

This daughter was a good sort of common girl, who, on the strength of being able to play very imperfectly on the piano, gave music-lessons in the neighbourhood to people of her own class at a shilling a lesson, and Florence, meeting her often outside the door, had bowed.

Thus these good people discussed our little heroine, as pure-minded a little woman as God ever created.





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ADVERTISEMENT ANSWERED.

‘ HATEVER is the matter with you, Blethin?’ said Tom Drax, as they sat over dinner on the Wednesday after their arrival in Paris. ‘ You’ve hardly made a remark all day. By Jove, Blethin, you beat any one in the art of making a fellow uncomfortable. Something has upset you—that official-looking letter that came this morning, I suppose—and I declare you’ve made me feel so wretched that I could commit suicide.’

‘ You’re a nice fellow to talk about suicide when you’re just about to take unto yourself a wife. What would Adela say to such a remark ?’

‘ Adela won’t do anything she’s asked to do, unless you tell her. I wish you’d make her fix a day for the wedding. I can’t get her to decide anything.’

‘ Women are capricious, Tom, and want managing. The great secret is to find out when to give them their head and let them go their own way, and when to hold them in tight. If you hold them tight when they should go loose, you break their spirit, and they ain’t worth anything ; and if you let them go when you should hold them in, you’ll lose your management of them altogether. You can easily manage Adela, if you try.’

‘ I’m afraid you’ll have to teach me, Blethin.’

‘Nonsense, boy ; a man must take care of his own wife, nobody else can do it for him. I’ll go to England to-morrow, and send her over if you like.’

‘Oh ! you mustn’t leave us yet,’ exclaimed both brothers at once ; ‘you promised to wait till Adela came.’

‘But unexpected circumstances take me back.’

‘Oh ! dash it all,’ said Tom, ‘you’re always having “unexpected circumstances” turn up now, Blethin. You’re quite an altered man ; you used to do just as you liked, and were at nobody’s call, and now you are always wanted unexpectedly, and not for anything that I can see, except a girl in blue spectacles. It’s too bad of you, Blethin, always upsetting us like this.’

‘My dear fellow, I’m sorry to upset you, but I can’t help it. I am afraid I am ~~alternatives~~ as you say. I don’t know whether

it has ever occurred to you, Tom, but you're rather altered yourself since you fell in love with Adela. You're as irritable and fidgety as you can be. Falling in love does alter a man ; it makes some irritable and some quiet.'

'Well, you're quiet enough,' said Tom ; 'but you don't mean to say you're in love, Blethin ? It is only a few weeks ago you were declaring yourself above such weakness, eh ?'

'And it was only a few days after that I proved everything I said was false, by falling as deeply in love as a man can do.'

'You're joking,' said Jack. 'Surely you don't mean to say I'm the only sane man among you ?'

'If you're out of love, I suppose you are,' said Lord Brodspeare.

'Well,' said Jack, 'I used to count myself the fool among you, and now I know I'm the wise man. I have a couple of moon-

struck fellows to take care of. Pass the decanter, Blethin ; I must have another glass of wine to steady my nerves, and think over my responsible position.'

' You'll soon have me off your mind, for I must go to England, and there I shall stay till I have found her.'

' Found whom ? Why, Blethin, this is becoming romantic,' said Jack. ' Have you lost your love ?'

' We haven't heard who she is,' said Tom.

' It is Miss Florence Lisle, the lady whom you saw jump into the sea, and afterwards you saw her in the bookseller's shop.'

' By Jove, Blethin, you are an odd fellow ; fancy falling in love with that little thing. She was pretty, though,' said Tom.

' Pretty !' said Lord Brodspeare ; ' she's the most beautiful and the best little woman in the world.'



‘But are you serious?’ said Tom. ‘Do you mean to marry her?’

‘Decidedly, if she’ll have me, and when I can find her. And I am determined I will find her.’

‘But was she not at the shop when you left Draxfell to look for her?’ said Tom.

‘She was living there, but left the next day, when she heard I had been. Some vile creatures have persuaded her that I mean harm.’

‘But can’t you anyhow find where she’s gone?’ said Tom; ‘she must have friends somewhere, and the people at the shop must know about them.’

‘No,’ said Lord Brodspeare; ‘the poor child seems to have no friends. But at any rate she has some enemies, as may be seen from a communication I had this morning.’

‘What is it?’ said Tom.

‘Well, I advertised for the child, and I have to-day had this answer. I know it is false—that it is not written by herself, for she couldn’t write such a vulgar letter. It’s not a bit like her. The handwriting is intended for an imitation, but it is not hers. She has an enemy, who is interested in keeping her away from me. It is downright wicked. I know the child likes me. She has been forced against her will to believe that I am bad.’

‘Have you any of her handwriting?’ said Jack.

‘Yes,’ answered Lord Brodspeare, ‘but I need not show it to you. I am convinced that this is a forgery.’

‘Why not set a detective to work?’ said Jack.

‘That’s what I shall do,’ said Lord Brodspeare. ‘I am going to town to instruct the lawyers at once.’

‘But you can manage that by letter,’ said Tom. ‘You’ll do no good by going yourself, and we shall be wretched without you.’

‘You were just saying I made you feel inclined to kill yourself, Tom, and now you want me to stay. How contrary you are. You’re as fretful as a girl.’

‘You may as well wait till Adela comes over, there’s a good fellow. You can do nothing by going to town. The lawyers will do all that can be done ; and you can do a great deal here by helping me to amuse Jack, for you know he gets dreadfully bored unless he is amused.’

It was rather the other way, that Jack had to keep Tom amused ; but Tom had a curious way of fixing all his own faults on his brother.

If Tom had been asked to describe Jack’s character, he would have given an exact

picture of himself. The fact was, that Tom found his beautiful Adela decidedly troublesome. He was quite ready to allow her to have her own way so long as he could be always with her ; but he wanted some one to make up his mind for him, and Jack, who had been accustomed to do it, now felt that Adela came between them.

Adela, indeed, was quite ready to govern him, but she did not seem inclined to consult his feelings in the least. He fancied therefore that, if Lord Brodspeare remained till Adela joined them, he might do something with her. He did not care to say too much on the subject, for he hardly liked to acknowledge his weakness to himself ; but Lord Brodspeare could see his anxiety, and decided to stay and help him.

So he wrote to Mr. Sharp, junior ; told him the letter was a forgery, as he had handwriting in his possession for comparison ; that

he was not to advertise any more for the present, as it was evidently no good, but to go on using any other means to find her that he thought proper, and to continue to send to him in Paris till further notice.

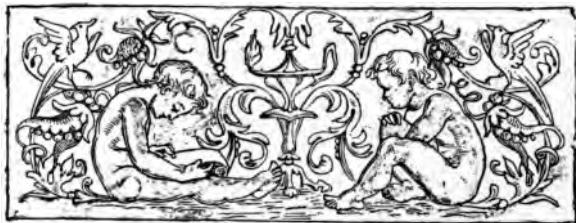
When Lord Brodspeare went to his room that night, he once more took out the treasured piece of paper, and placed it by the side of the letter.

‘ Impossible !’ he said to himself. ‘ One is the work of a perfect lady—a poetic creature. Even if she does think I am bad, she tells me so poetically. And, by Jove, if I had been a scoundrel, such a reproof as that would have cured me. What a charming little thing she is !’ And this thing,’ he thought, tossing the letter aside, ‘ she is incapable of writing. Were she married, or going to be, she would tell me so quite differently. I am sure this is done without her knowledge. She has some enemy. Who can it be ? If her friends

want to keep her away from me, they would surely take some other means of doing it than writing a letter of this sort. They may do what they like, I will not rest till I find her.'

And so Lord Brodspeare went to bed, thinking of his pretty little Florence, and exaggerating, in his own mind, her beauty and goodness, if that were possible, by reason of the difficulty of finding her.





CHAPTER XIX.

FLORENCE IN DOUBT.

WHILE Lord Brodspeare and the brothers were having their after-dinner conversation, Mrs. Courtenay was making her way to Charing Cross Station, to the evening mail-train. She was a woman who did everything for effect. Her maid, who travelled with her, was a model of a lady's-maid ; not dressed in cast-off finery of her mistress's, but in proper style.

Adela got out at the station, and walked in stately fashion up the platform, followed by

her maid, carrying *Punch*, the *World*, and a few other papers. Not that Adela ever read much, but she just patronised the pictures in *Punch*, and liked the scandal in the *World*; and when travelling she thought it looked well to have the papers grouped round her.

The footman followed with fur wrappers. She got into the carriage. The footman arranged the furs, the maid arranged the papers, and placed a paper-knife with them, and then took her seat in the carriage, for she travelled with her mistress when alone.

And so Adela left London, feeling that her prisoner was safe in Miss Best's clutches until she could be disposed of elsewhere.

'And now,' thought Adela, 'I will make one more trial, and throw over poor Tom if I am successful.'

Miss Best took a gushing farewell of her



cousin in her own room, for Adela, knowing what her cousin was, had sent for her and said :

‘ Now, Helen, remember all I have said, and, above all, don’t let her out alone unless you have word from me that *he* is safe out of the country ; and don’t let the children get too fond of her. Try and be kind to her, Helen, and make her love you——’

‘ Oh, Adela ! a creature of that sort !’

‘ But for *his* sake you must do it. I shall keep him out there as long as I can. And keep in with the children as much as you can. I know what little brutes they are ; but if you are too severe, they will take to her. And now I’ll say good-bye, Helen——’

‘ Oh, dearest Adela, let me come to the door with you !’

‘ No, no ; we mustn’t have an exhibition of feeling before servants ; it’s decidedly vulgar.

There, now, don't mess me,' she said, for Helen was throwing her arms round her neck.

Florence had spent two hours of the afternoon alone with Mrs. Courtenay, and was now in her bedroom in a very disconsolate and unhappy state. She had cried until she had quite spoiled the look of her pretty face, and then had tried to reason with herself. She looked round her luxurious room, and thought how thankful she ought to be; and yet she wasn't.

She thought of Betty's humble parlour in River Terrace, and how happy she had been there; and she thought of honest little 'third-floor,' and his quiet, nervous ways; and dear, big Betty with her Devonshire accent. She longed to run out of the house and go to them.

She tried to find out why she was so un-



happy, and analysed her feelings. She thought of her misery at the loss of her father ; but it wasn't like the misery she was suffering now. She thought of her struggles for a living, of having to leave Mrs. Tubbs in a hurry, and Mr. Kershaw in the same manner ; and still she did not suffer then as now. She wondered what it could be that weighed her down.

Before she came to Adela she had little prospect of doing well, whereas now she had found a friend who was willing to do anything for her ; and yet she was miserable.

At first she was attracted by the beautiful woman, but now she shrank from the sight of her. She was always nervous of meeting her on the stairs, or being summoned to her room. Miss Best she despised, and therefore was not more troubled with her than one is naturally with the presence of a person one

dislikes. The children she loved, but was told day after day to be more distant with them, and more severe. She felt that she had come into a new world ; that all the rest of her life had been a dream ; that she must learn to hate all she had loved before, and love what she had hated. And she didn't like the process. Mrs. Courtenay had talked very seriously to her that afternoon about her prospects in life. She had never thought that 'prospects in life' were anything so serious. She had always done her best and trusted in God, and not calculated too much in advance of anything. She could only understand what was simple, and it seemed to her that life was getting complicated. It was only that day week she had first seen Mrs. Courtenay, and it seemed as long as all the rest of her life put together. She prayed that she might be able to do all that Mrs. Courtenay required of her, and that she

might be grateful for Mrs. Courtenay's kindness ; but the prayer seemed to die away on her lips. She argued with herself that perhaps she had been wicked in hitherto trusting so much to God, instead of her own exertions. Her new life required so much exertion on her own part, so much crushing down of feeling, so much with which prayer seemed to have nothing to do. She was kneeling down by the bed with her face buried in her hands. How she longed for some one who would help her out of her misery. She tried to ask God to help her, but it seemed wrong, and ever since she had been in that house, something appeared to surround her and shut her out from God. She thought of her hero, but he seemed shut out also. She was drifting away from everything she had loved. Why must she suffer like this ? Was it that she was passing from childhood to womanhood, and did every one have to

pass through the same suffering ? Did God cease to take so much care of people when they became old enough to take care of themselves. How she wished she was a child again, with no unhappiness beyond a scolding from Betty for a disordered dress.

As she knelt there with these thoughts passing through her mind, Miss Best knocked at the door. This roused Florence, but she was ashamed of being seen in such a state, and did not answer.

Miss Best knocked again, and opened the door a little way, and said :

‘ May I come in ?’

‘ Yes,’ said Florence, rising up and trying to make the best of her face.

‘ Oh, my dear Miss Fawdon !’ said Miss Best blandly ; ‘ how you have been crying, and no wonder, at losing my dear cousin. I am sure I’ve nearly cried my eyes out ; but that’s no good, we must try and bear it.’



Now Miss Best had not by any means been ‘crying her eyes out,’ as she termed it; but had been going all over the house regarding herself as ‘monarch of all she surveyed.’ She thought it a fine thing to be mistress of this beautiful house, and to be able to order the servants as she liked. ’Tis true that the drawing-room was to be covered up, and only the library used; but Miss Best had made use of this last evening in the drawing-room by lounging on various couches and chairs and regarding herself in the mirrors, wondering how she should look as mistress of such a house. Then she had gone to Adela’s room and helped herself to various perfumes.

As she carried the perfumes to her own room, which was on the same floor as Florence’s, it occurred to her she’d have a chat with Florence. Notwithstanding her pretence of horror of ‘this kind of creature,’



she liked the idea of being left in charge of a girl who was to be kept out of the way of a lord ; and she could not resist a bit of romance. Besides, she had a particularly sentimental fit on just now, after walking about the house looking at herself in all the mirrors. She was trying to fancy herself the mistress of such a place, with a rich man as husband. So it occurred to her she'd go and have a chat on romantic subjects with Florence.

‘It’s not that,’ said Florence. ‘I don’t cry when people go away ; but I don’t feel well.’

‘Oh, poor girl !’ said Miss Best ; ‘let me fetch you something.’

‘No,’ said Florence, ‘I’ll go to bed. I shall soon be all right.’

‘I must insist on your having something,’ said Miss Best, and she went out and returned with a glass of wine. ‘You see,



dear,' she said, becoming affectionate ; 'one always gets low spirited on these occasions, especially poor girls like us, left alone with no one to take care of us. Now my cousin has a dozen men to admire her, and will, I dare say, be married to Lord Brodspeare before long ; she can pick and choose, but we have to wait ; don't you envy her ? I do. Now cheer up, dear, and let's come down to the drawing-room and talk over everything.'

'I'd rather go to bed,' said Florence.

'Oh ! nonsense, dear,' said Miss Best. ' I must insist on your coming with me to-night. Now, bathe your face, in case the servants should see ; because it never does to exhibit one's feelings to them, it's so vulgar' (she had not forgotten her lesson), 'and let's come down and have a talk.'

Florence thought she had better do as she was told, as Mrs. Courtenay had particularly charged her to be amiable to Miss Best. So



they went and sat in state in the drawing-room.

‘Can’t you play something, Miss Fawdon?’ said Miss Best. ‘I do so adore music.’

‘No,’ said Florence, ‘I never learnt to play the piano.’

‘Nor did I,’ said Miss Best. ‘My education was very like yours. Isn’t that a love of a painting,’ she said, pointing to an oleograph on the wall of ‘The Falconer.’ ‘I do admire the lover so much. That is just the man I should choose. What do you think? Come here and look at it.’

They both stood in front of the picture.

‘Yes,’ said Florence, ‘it is pretty.’

‘Lovely!’ said Miss Best, putting her head on one side and her hand on Florence’s shoulder.

Florence shuddered at her touch.

The figures in the picture are in the position of lovers.

‘Oh, isn’t it nice to have a lover to embrace you like that?’ said Miss Best; and as she said it she put her arm round Florence’s waist.

Florence moved uneasily away, making pretence of wanting to see another picture. Miss Best followed her.

Florence still moved on; and, seeing no way of escape from the endearments of this unpleasant woman, finally proposed going to bed; but Miss Best would not hear of it.

‘Let us come and have a chat,’ she said, drawing her to a couch, ‘all about the future. Perhaps you will leave us very soon, and will go abroad. Oh! that will be nice. I hope I shall go abroad some day. I shall choose that for my honeymoon. And my cousin has left a certain sum with me which she says we may spend on clothes for you, that you may be all ready in case she should find you a situation. So now we



shall go out and choose the things. I love shopping, don't you ?'

And this enthusiastic young creature threw up her hands in delight.

'I really do not require any clothes,' said Florence. 'I hope you will not think of getting them.'

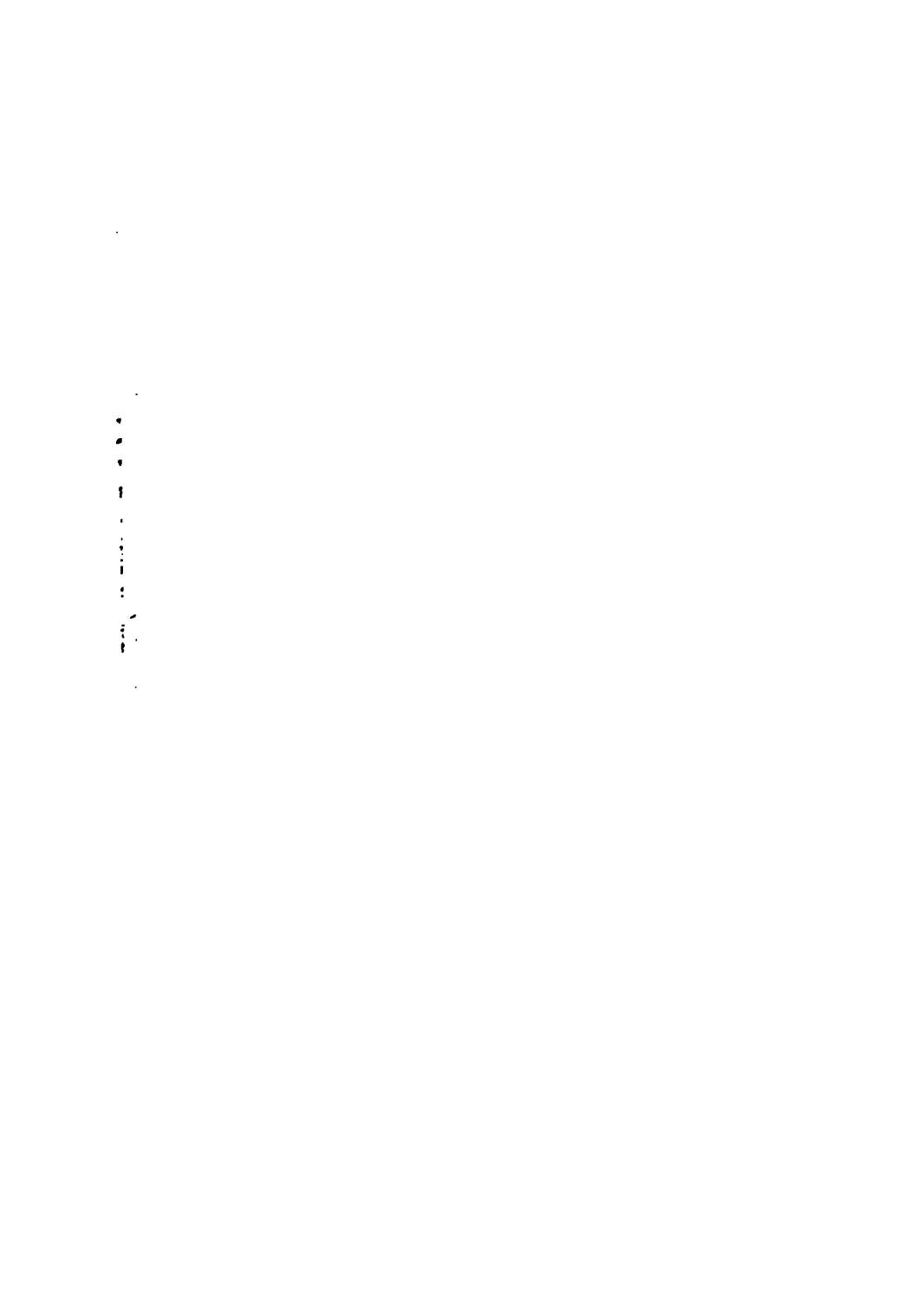
'Oh ! but my cousin says I am to have you all prepared in case she sends for you ; for she has taken such an interest in you that she will either have you out with her or get you a situation out there with some of her friends ; and, of course, you'll want an outfit. She doesn't know how soon you may have to go, so we must lose no time. You're sure to get married when you go abroad ; people always do.'

Poor Florence sat listening to a great deal more of this sort of thing, and at last was allowed to go upstairs to her room, accompanied by Miss Best, who put her arm in

hers as they walked up the stairs. She was in a very confidential mood, and quite disinclined to go to bed. After using various means to get Florence to talk on the subject of love and lovers, she accepted a very broad hint and left the room.

Florence went to bed in a state of misery and disgust.

END OF VOL. II.



1



—

—



